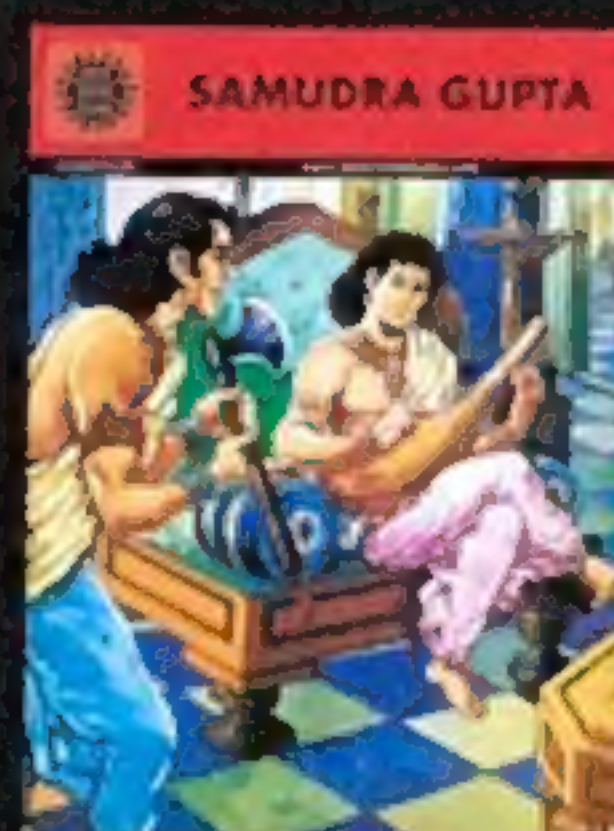


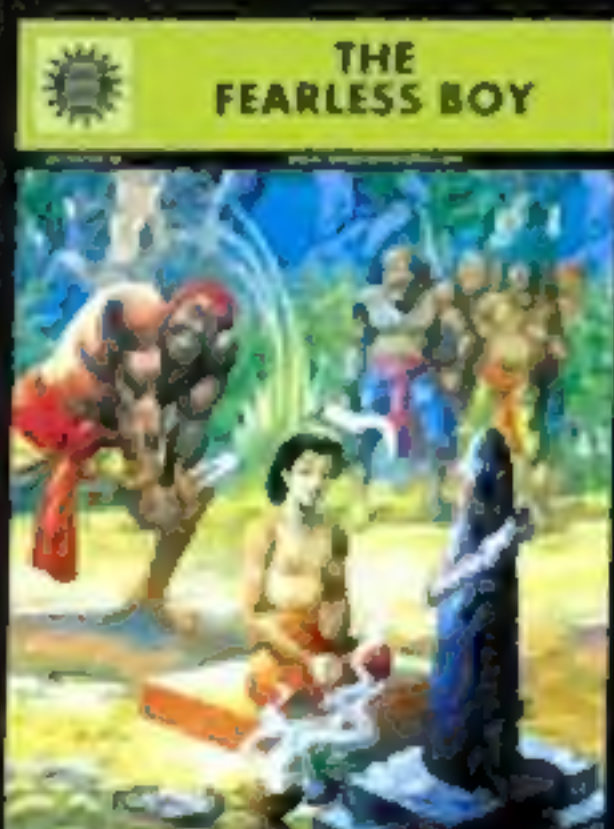
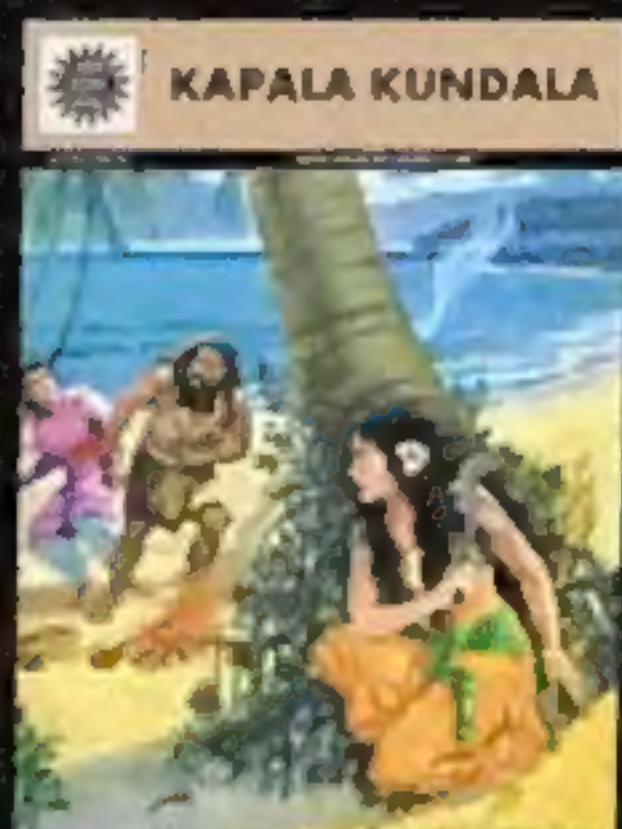
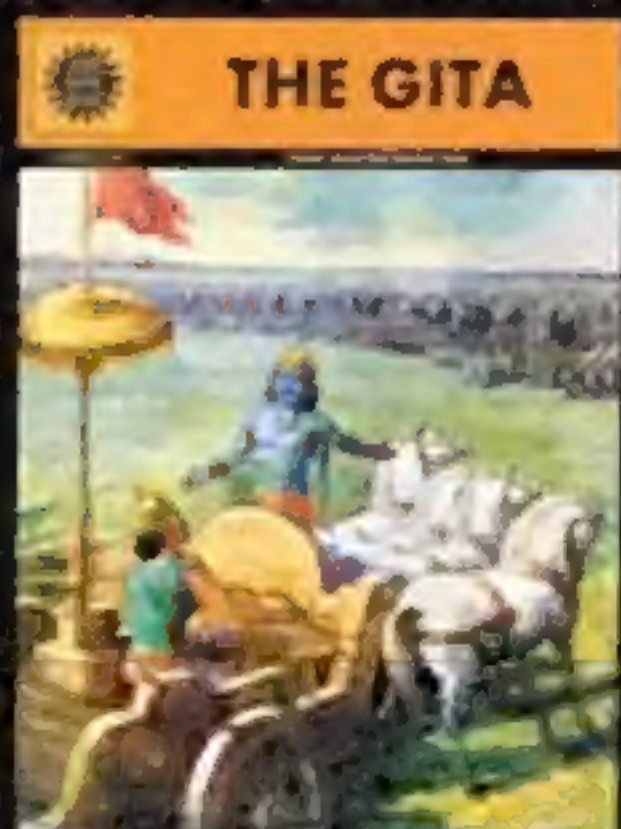
RANI DURGAVATI

She chose to be the wife of a brave, 'low-born' hero, rather than of a spineless 'high-born' fool. This was indeed fortunate for the people of Garha, for they gained a queen who could befuddle even the mightiest of Mughal armies. Her intelligence and courage were unmatched. But this made the Mughal general, Asaf Khan, all the more determined to subdue her.

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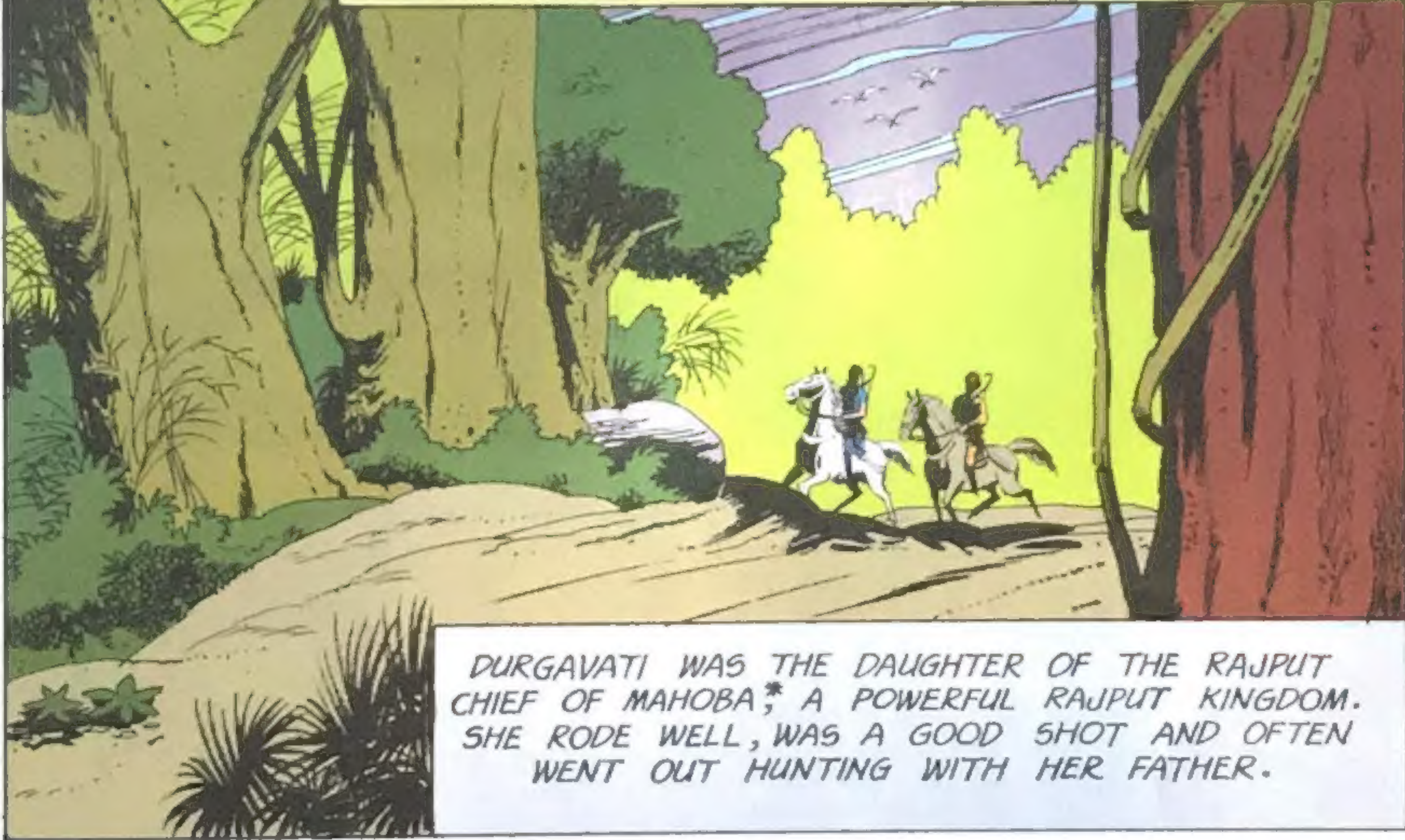


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RANI DURGAVATI

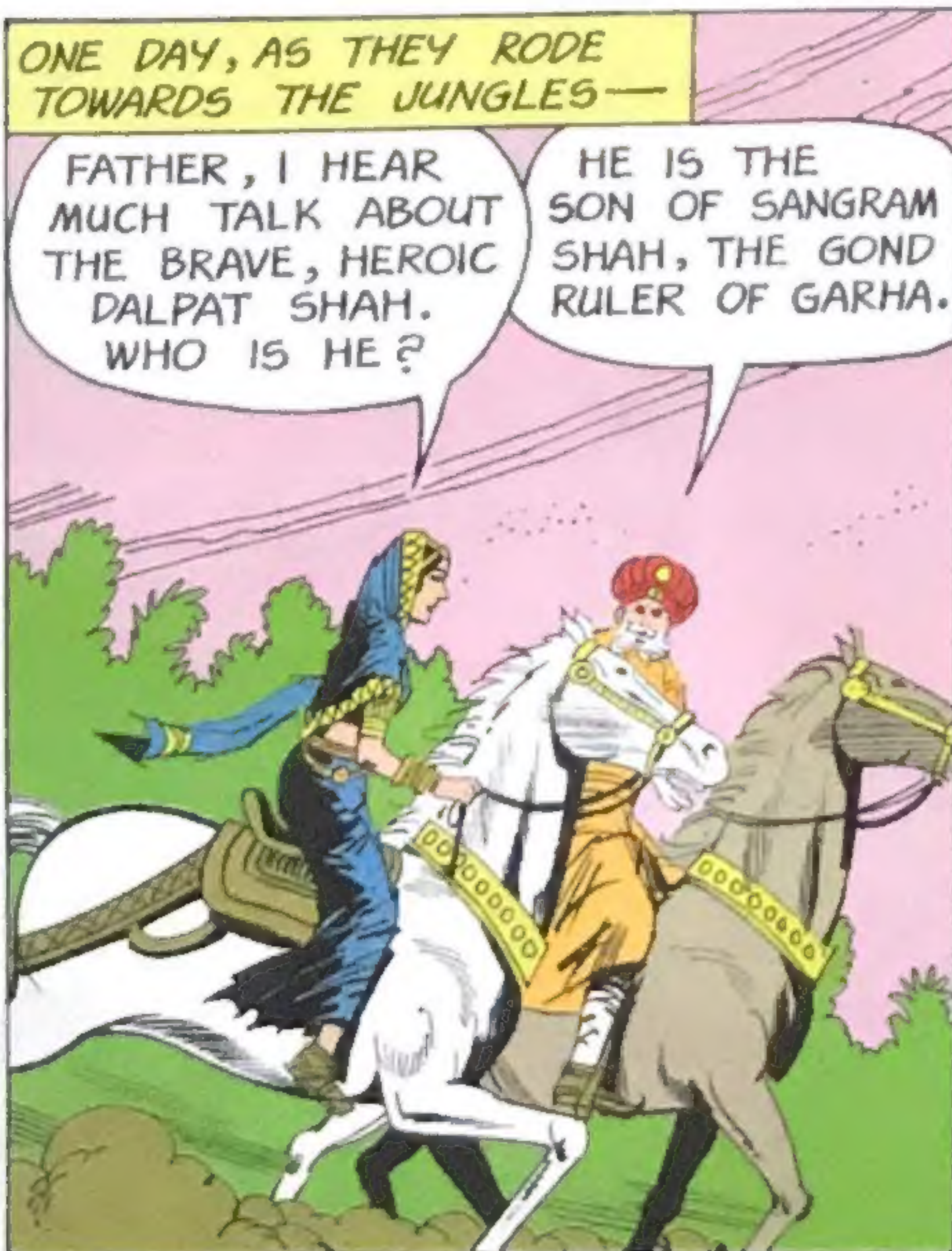


DURGAVATI WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE RAJPUT CHIEF OF MAHOBA, A POWERFUL RAJPUT KINGDOM. SHE RODE WELL, WAS A GOOD SHOT AND OFTEN WENT OUT HUNTING WITH HER FATHER.

ONE DAY, AS THEY RODE TOWARDS THE JUNGLES—

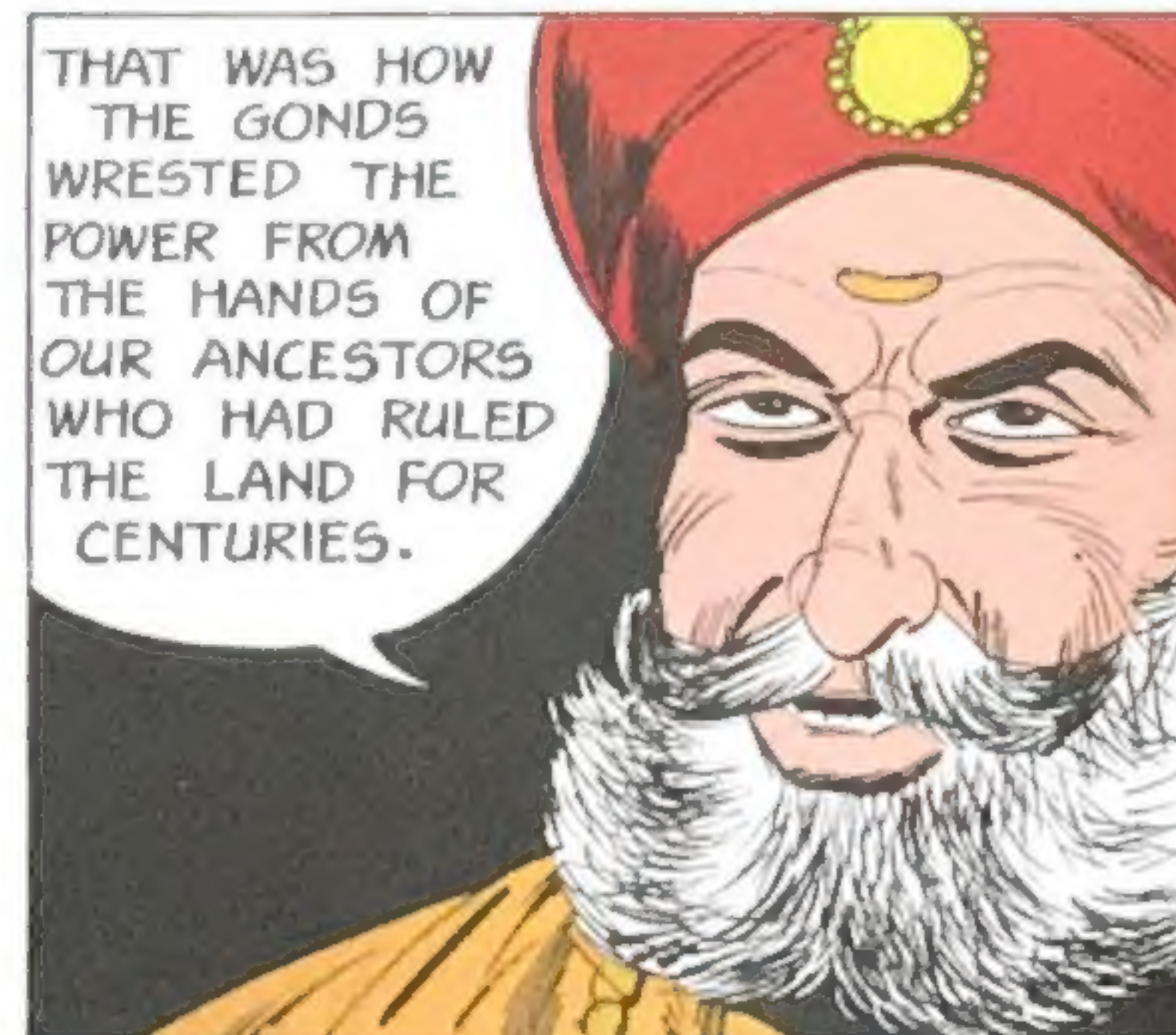
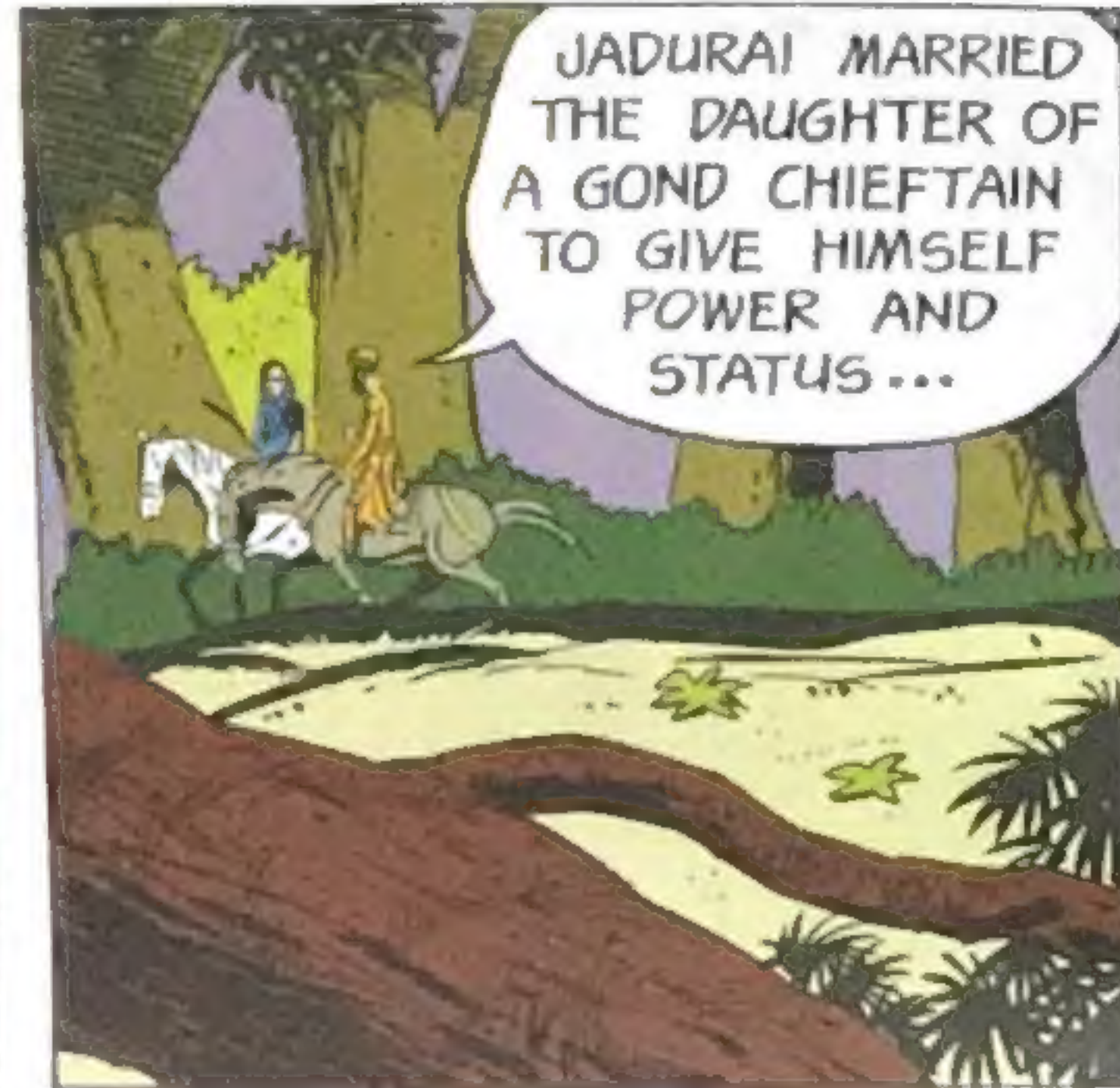
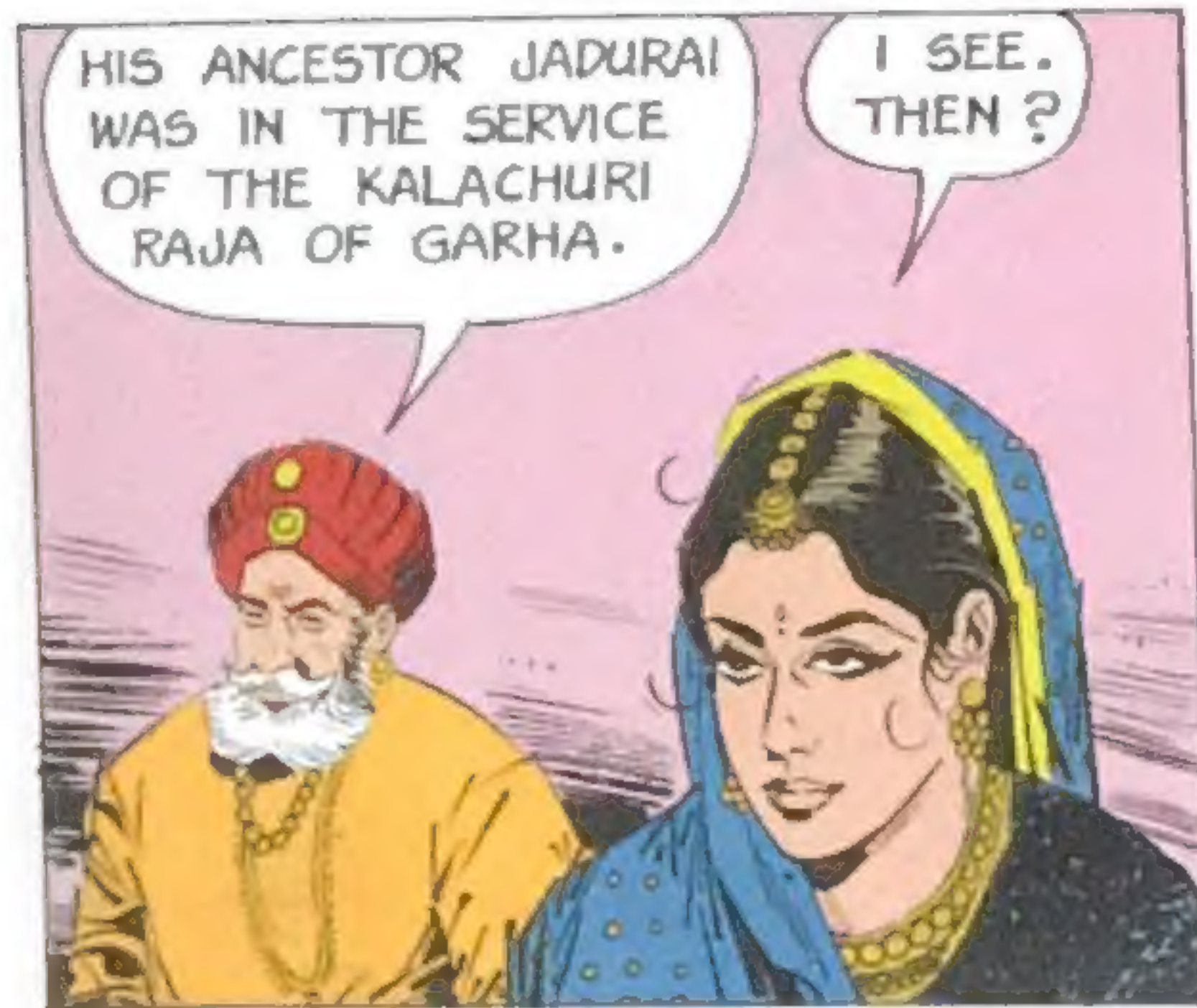
FATHER, I HEAR MUCH TALK ABOUT THE BRAVE, HEROIC DALPAT SHAH. WHO IS HE?

HE IS THE SON OF SANGRAM SHAH, THE GOND RULER OF GARHA.



A PRINCE?

YES. BUT OF LOW ORIGIN.



HE SENT THE ARROW FLYING.



SANGRAM'S HEART SWELLED WITH PRIDE.

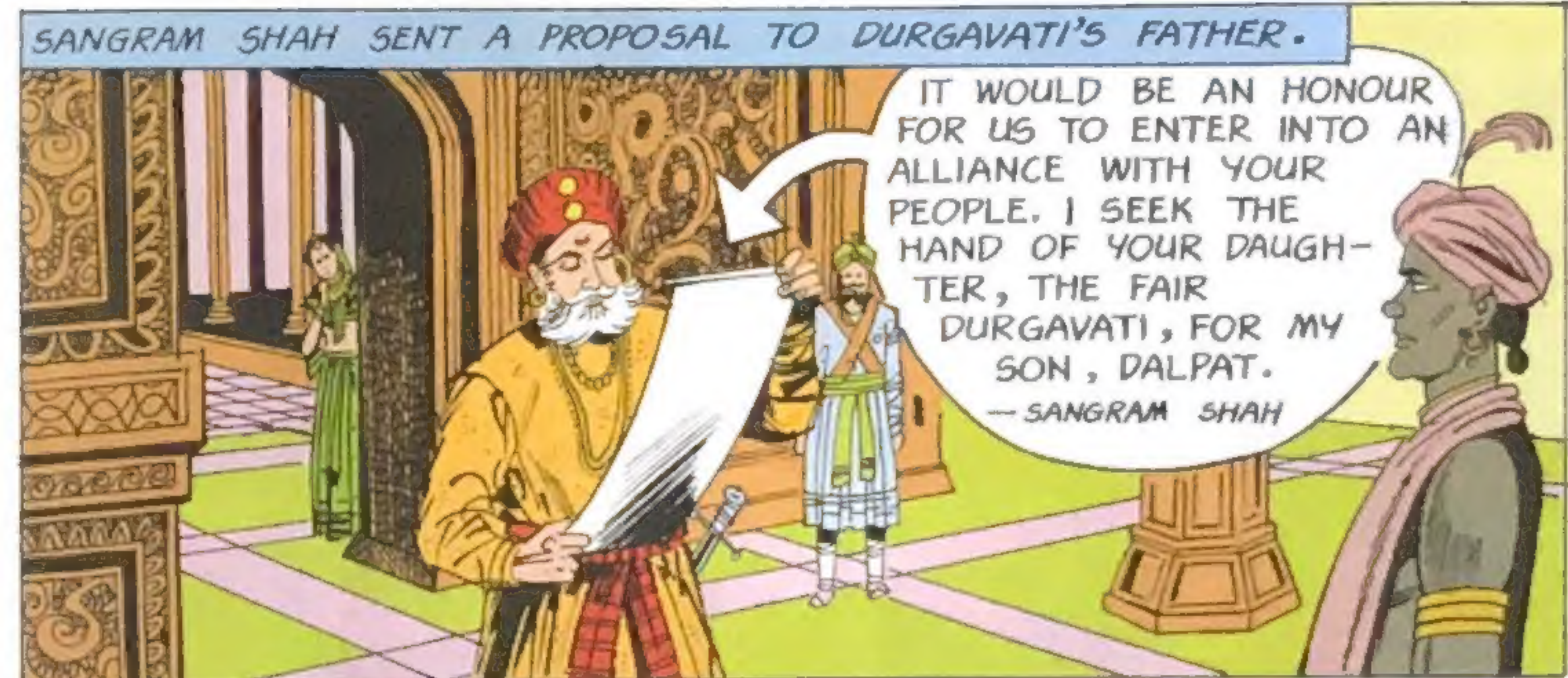
MY HANDSOME, DARING, MANLY SON. YOU SHALL MARRY A PRINCESS WORTHY OF YOU.



I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER MATCH THAN DURGAVATI, THE PRINCESS OF MAHOBA.



SANGRAM SHAH SENT A PROPOSAL TO DURGAVATI'S FATHER.



IT WOULD BE AN HONOUR FOR US TO ENTER INTO AN ALLIANCE WITH YOUR PEOPLE. I SEEK THE HAND OF YOUR DAUGHTER, THE FAIR DURGAVATI, FOR MY SON, DALPAT.

—SANGRAM SHAH



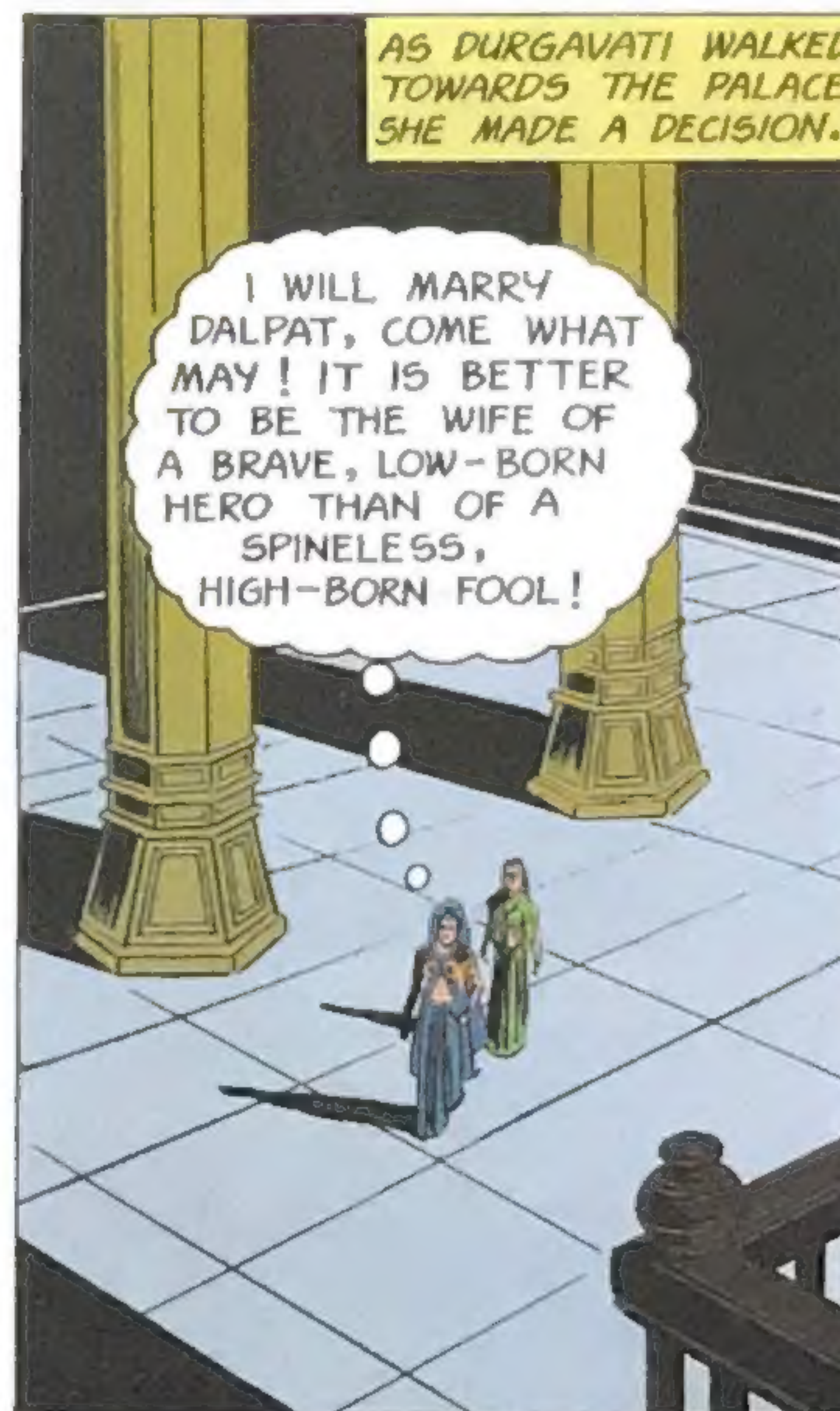
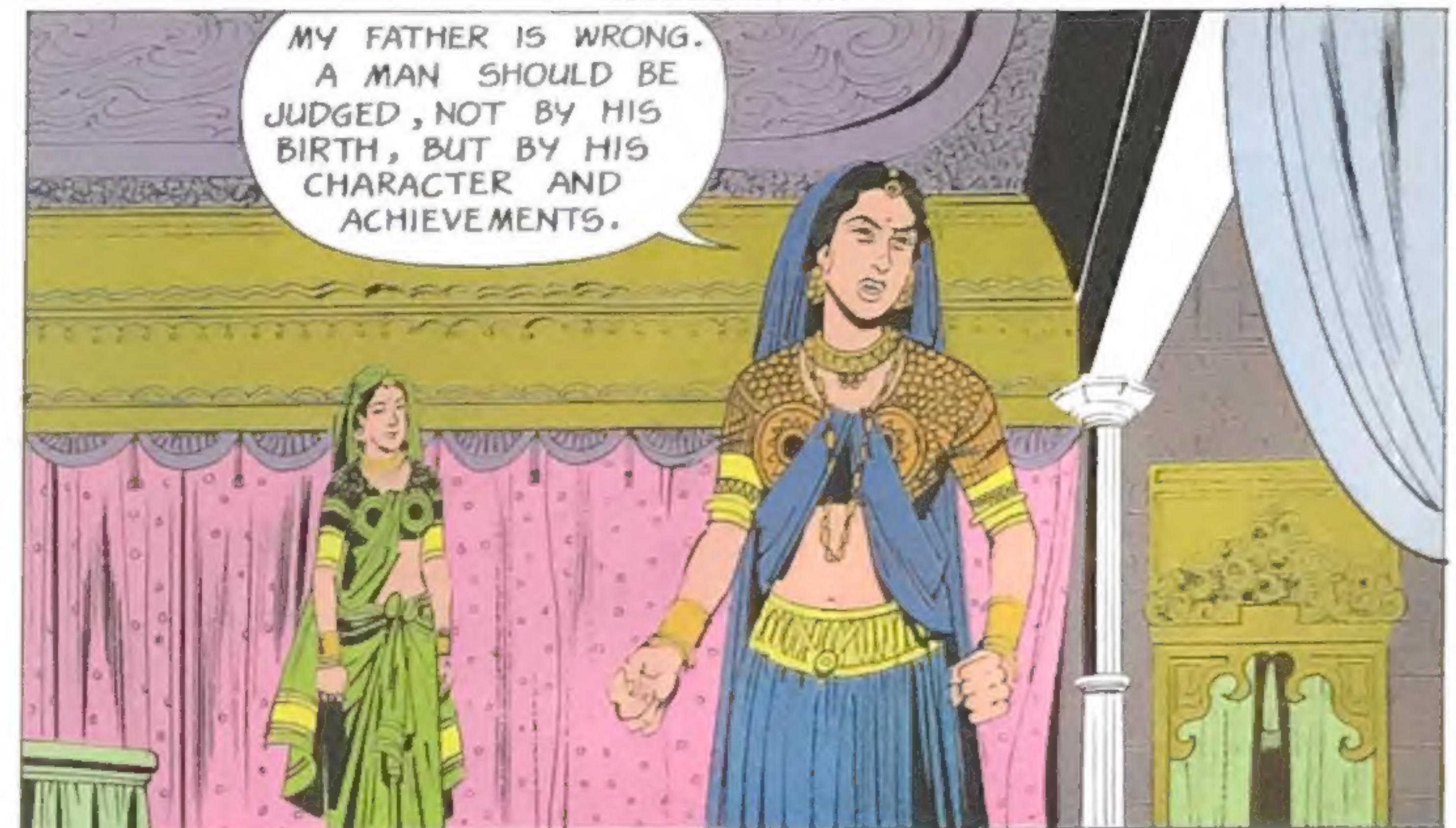
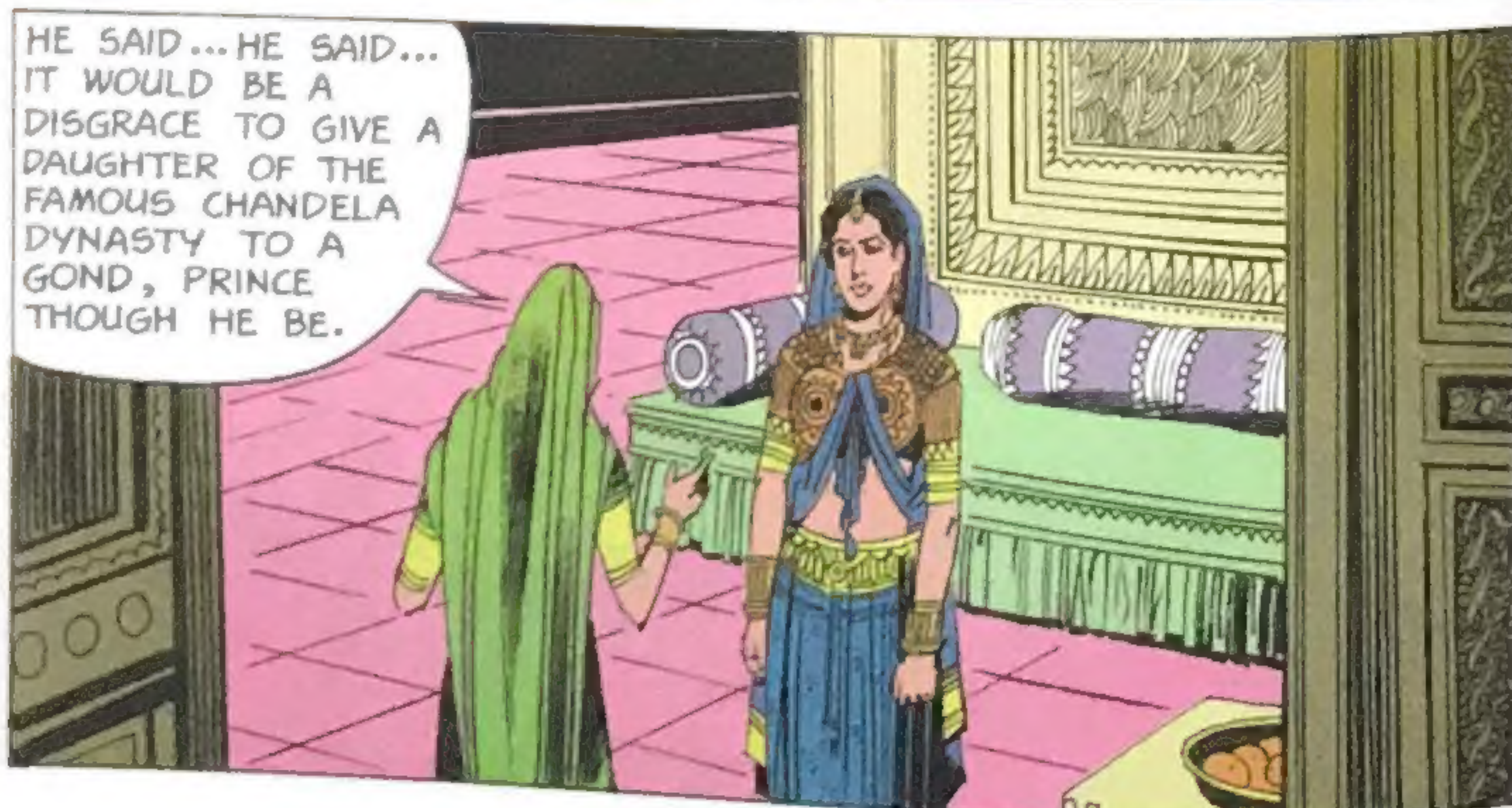
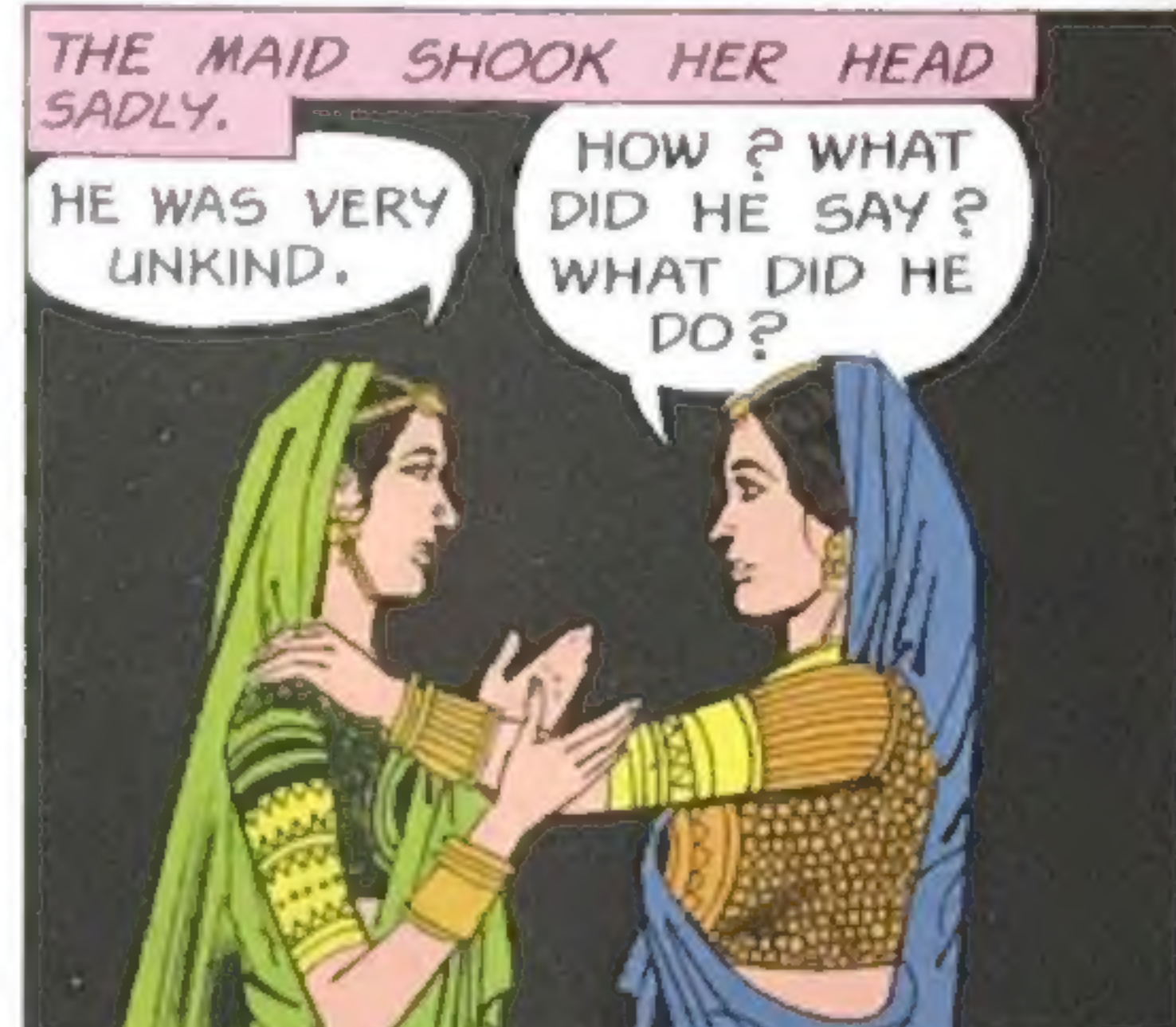
DALPAT IS A PRINCE, NO DOUBT. BUT A PRINCESS OF THE FAMOUS CHANDELA DYNASTY TO MARRY A MERE GOND? NO! NEVER! IT MAY BE AN HONOUR FOR YOU, SANGRAM SHAH. BUT IT WOULD MEAN DISGRACE FOR OUR FAMILY.

AND DURGAVATI'S FATHER REPLIED, EXPRESSING HIS REGRETS.



TAKE THIS TO YOUR CHIEF.

MEANWHILE, THE MAID RAN TO DURGAVATI.



SHE TURNED TO THE MAID.

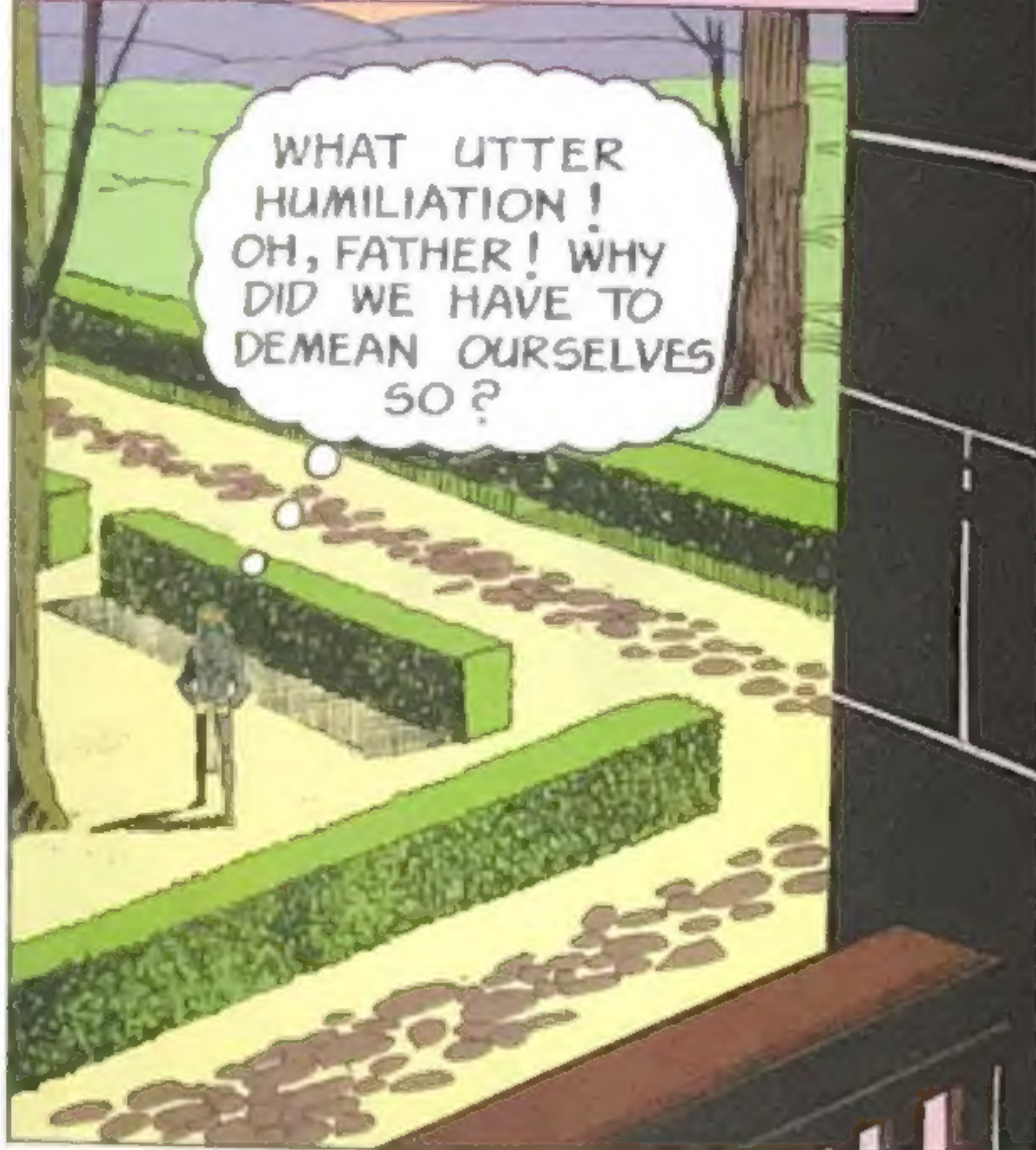
TAKE THIS TO THE SON OF THE GOND RULER. AND... AND... BE DISCREET ABOUT IT.

YOU CAN TRUST ME TO DO THAT, MISTRESS.



MEANWHILE, AT GARHA, NEWS OF THE MAHOBA CHIEF'S REBUFF HAD ALREADY REACHED DALPAT.

WHAT UTTER HUMILIATION! OH, FATHER! WHY DID WE HAVE TO DEMEAN OURSELVES SO?



THERE ARE MANY GOOD GIRLS AMONG OUR OWN PEOPLE. I COULD HAVE MARRIED ONE OF THEM. WHY, O WHY, DID YOU BOW BEFORE THAT HAUGHTY RAJPUT?



AS HE BROODED THUS, THE MAID CAME THERE.

SIR, A MESSAGE FROM MY MISTRESS — DURGA VATI, THE PRINCESS OF MAHOBA.



DALPAT READ THE NOTE.

MY FATHER, AFTER ALL, CHOSE NO ORDINARY PRINCESS.

WHAT SHALL I TELL MY MISTRESS, SIR?



TELL HER I SHALL COME.

I WILL, SIR. I WILL.



WHEN THE MAID LEFT, DALPAT WENT TO SANGRAM.

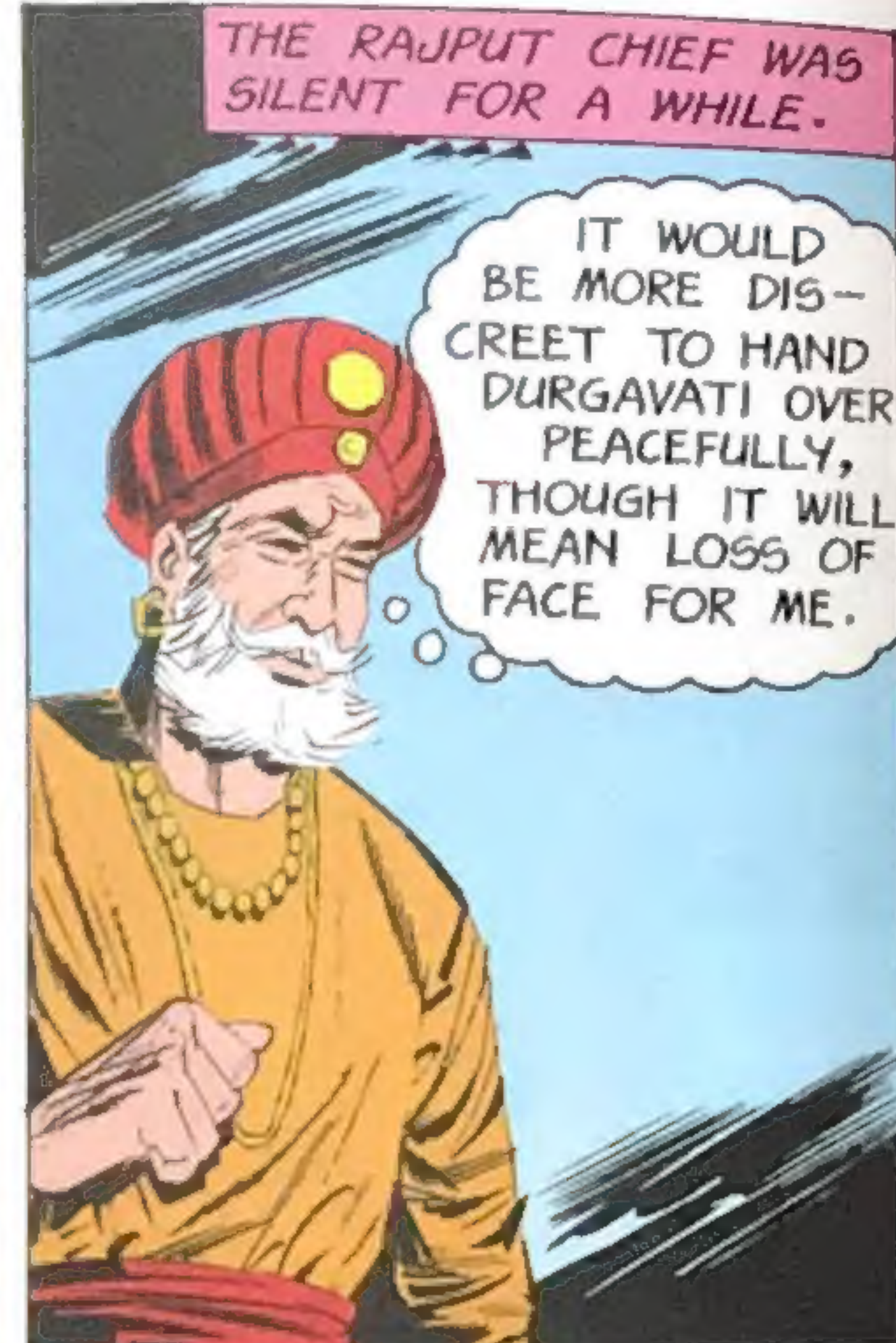
FATHER, I HAVE DECIDED TO MAKE DURGA VATI MY WIFE. WITH HER FATHER'S CONSENT, IF POSSIBLE; WITHOUT IF NECESSARY.

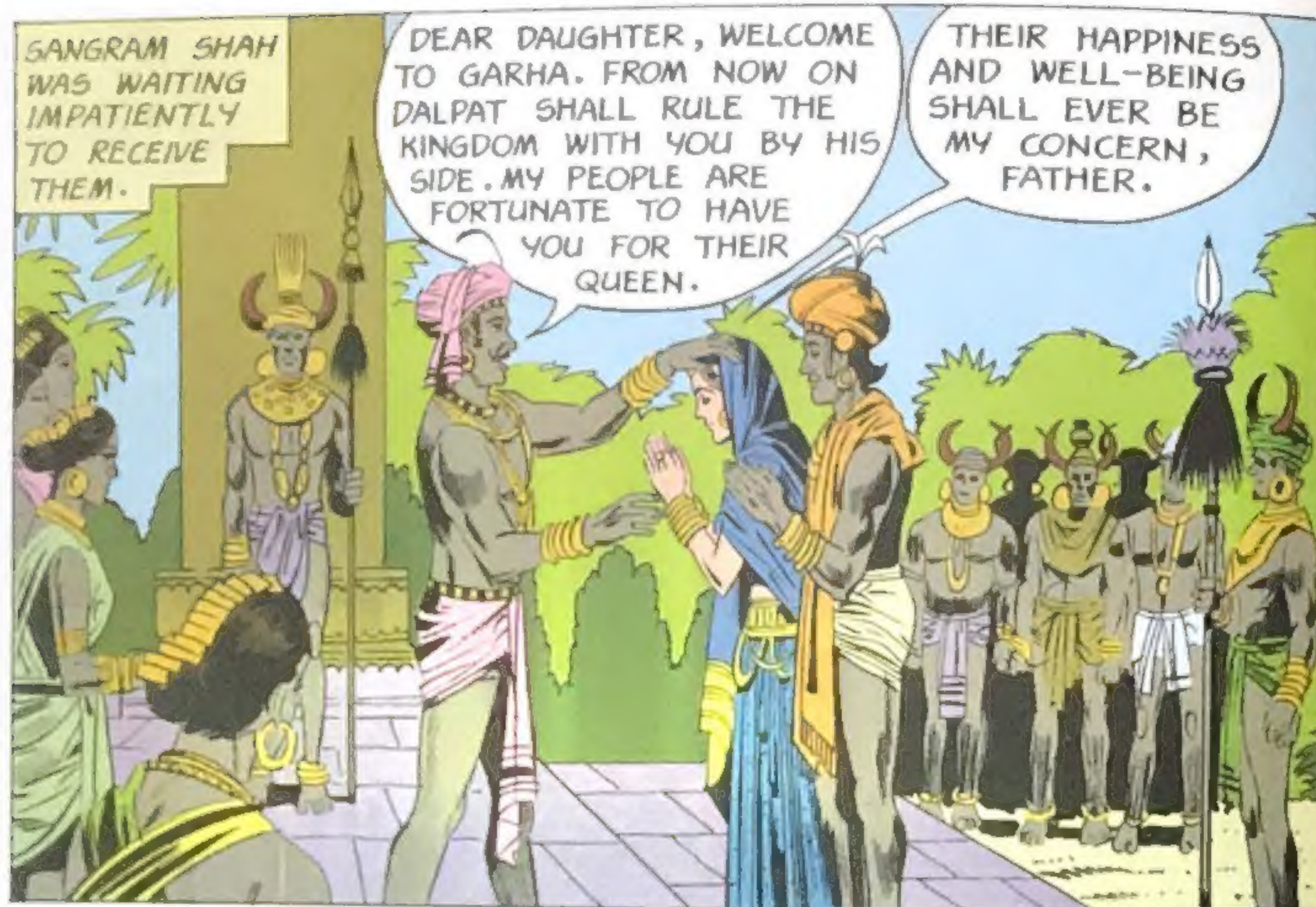


SANGRAM WAS DELIGHTED.

I SHALL ORDER OUR MEN TO GET READY TO MARCH INTO MAHOBA.







GANGRAM SHAH WAS WAITING IMPATIENTLY TO RECEIVE THEM.

DEAR DAUGHTER, WELCOME TO GARHA. FROM NOW ON DALPAT SHALL RULE THE KINGDOM WITH YOU BY HIS SIDE. MY PEOPLE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE YOU FOR THEIR QUEEN.

THEIR HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING SHALL EVER BE MY CONCERN, FATHER.

A YEAR LATER, A SON WAS BORN TO THE HAPPY YOUNG COUPLE.



WE SHALL NAME HIM BIR NARAYAN.

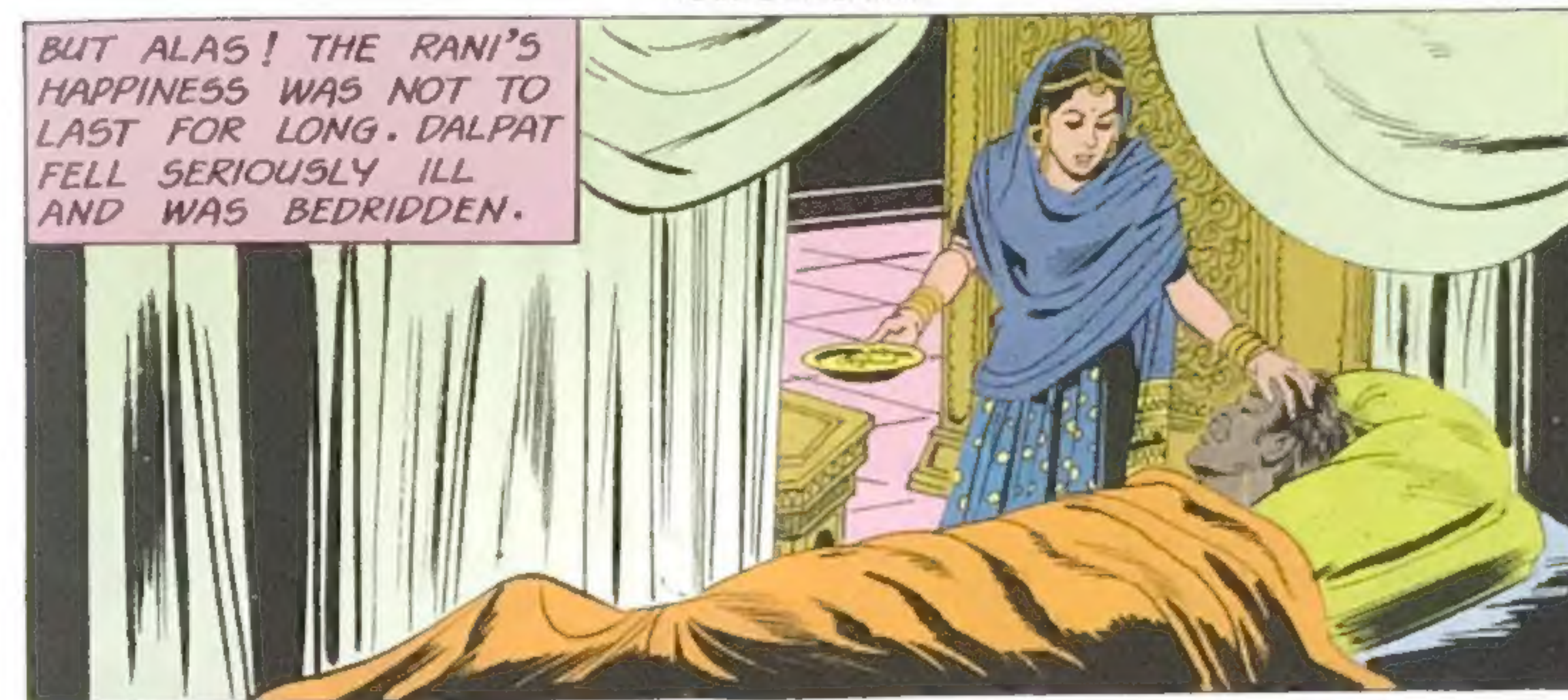
AN APT NAME FOR THE FUTURE RULER OF GARHA.

THREE YEARS PASSED. BIR NARAYAN WAS NOW A MISCHIEVOUS INFANT.



NO FAMILY MUST BE AS HAPPY AS OURS IN ALL GARHA.

BUT ALAS! THE RANI'S HAPPINESS WAS NOT TO LAST FOR LONG. DALPAT FELL SERIOUSLY ILL AND WAS BEDRIDDEN.



A FEW DAYS LATER, AS DURGA VATI WAS OUT IN THE GARDEN WITH BIR NARAYAN—



RANI! RANI! THE PRINCE...

DALPAT WAS NO MORE. YOUNG DURGA VATI WAS WIDOWED. AS A RAJPUTNI*, HER FIRST THOUGHT WAS TO JOIN HER HUSBAND IN DEATH. BUT —



NO! FOR THE SAKE OF MY SON I MUST NOT GIVE IN TO MY GRIEF. GREAT TASKS LIE AHEAD OF ME.



I MUST PROVE WORTHY OF MY NOBLE ANCESTRY AND RULE THE KINGDOM WITH COURAGE TILL YOU COME OF AGE.

RANI DURGAVATI SOON ENDEARED HERSELF TO THE PEOPLE.

THE RANI IS LIKE A MOTHER TO US.

YES SHE WILL NOT PERMIT EVEN THE LOWLIEST TO BE UNHAPPY FOR A MOMENT.

THAT'S TRUE. THERE IS NONE TO EQUAL HER IN JUSTICE.



ONE DAY —

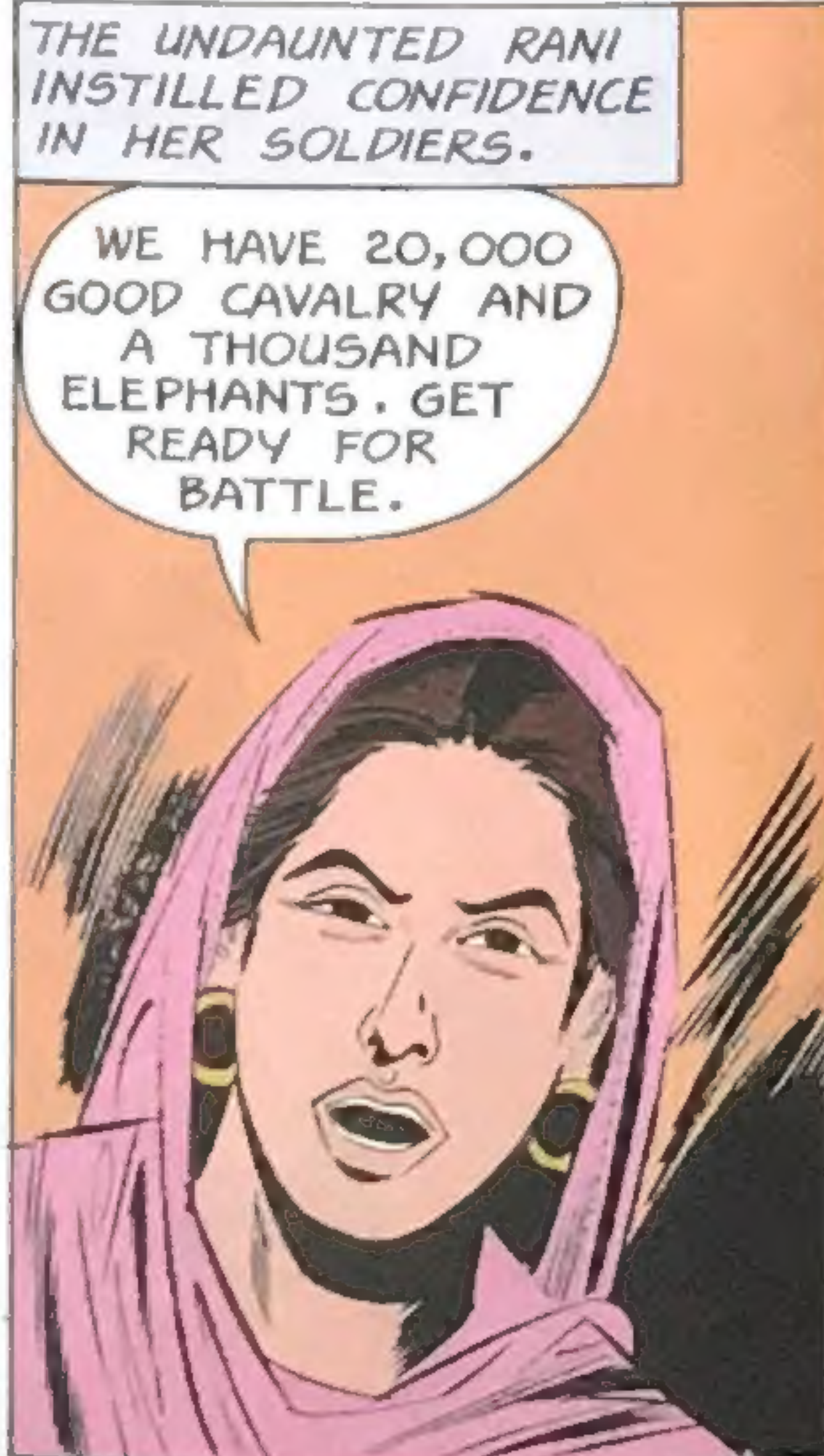
RANI! RANI! BAZ BAHADUR IS HERE AGAIN.

DON'T WORRY. WE'LL SEND HIM BACK.



THE UNDAUNTED RANI INSTILLED CONFIDENCE IN HER SOLDIERS.

WE HAVE 20,000 GOOD CAVALRY AND A THOUSAND ELEPHANTS. GET READY FOR BATTLE.

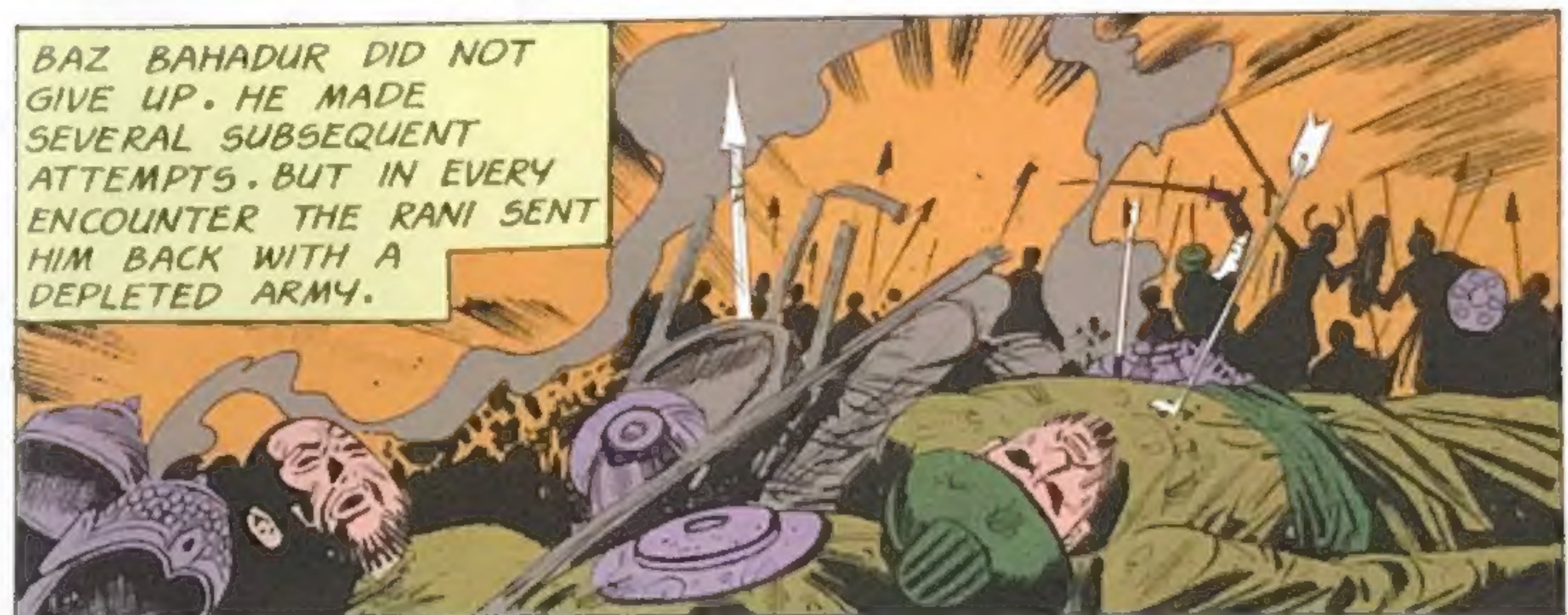


* A NEIGHBOURING AFGHAN RULER

THE BATTLE WAS A FIERCE ONE. BUT THE RANI AND HER TROOPS EMERGED VICTORIOUS.



BAZ BAHADUR DID NOT GIVE UP. HE MADE SEVERAL SUBSEQUENT ATTEMPTS. BUT IN EVERY ENCOUNTER THE RANI SENT HIM BACK WITH A DEPLETED ARMY.



AFTER SEVERAL SUCH ATTACKS, HOWEVER —

OUR COFFERS ARE EMPTY. THE WARS WITH BAZ BAHADUR AND HIS MEN HAVE COST US A GREAT DEAL.



WHEN THE RANI REMAINED SILENT, DEEP IN THOUGHT —



I SUGGEST WE INCREASE THE TAXES ON OUR PEOPLE.

NO! MONEY LOST IN WAR SHALL BE WON BY WAR.



RALLY OUR MEN. WE SHALL ATTACK THE PETTY RAJAS OF THE LAND.



RAJA AFTER RAJA WAS ATTACKED.

AND EACH TIME THE RANI AND HER SOLDIERS WERE THE VICTORS.



CARRY AWAY ALL THE TREASURE YOU CAN FIND. BUT LEAVE THE CITY INTACT.

SOON, THE ONCE EMPTY COFFERS WERE OVERFLOWING WITH WEALTH.



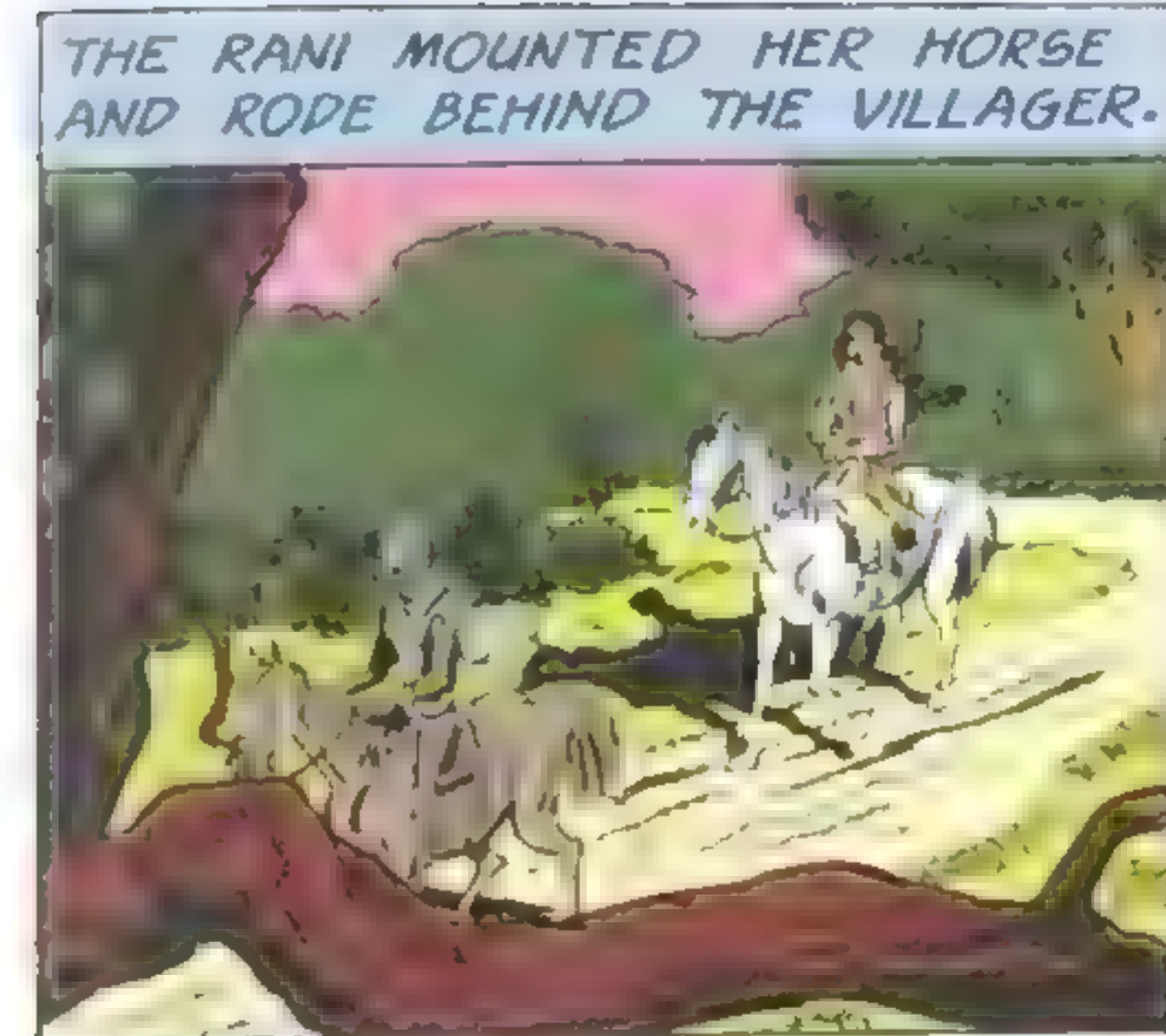
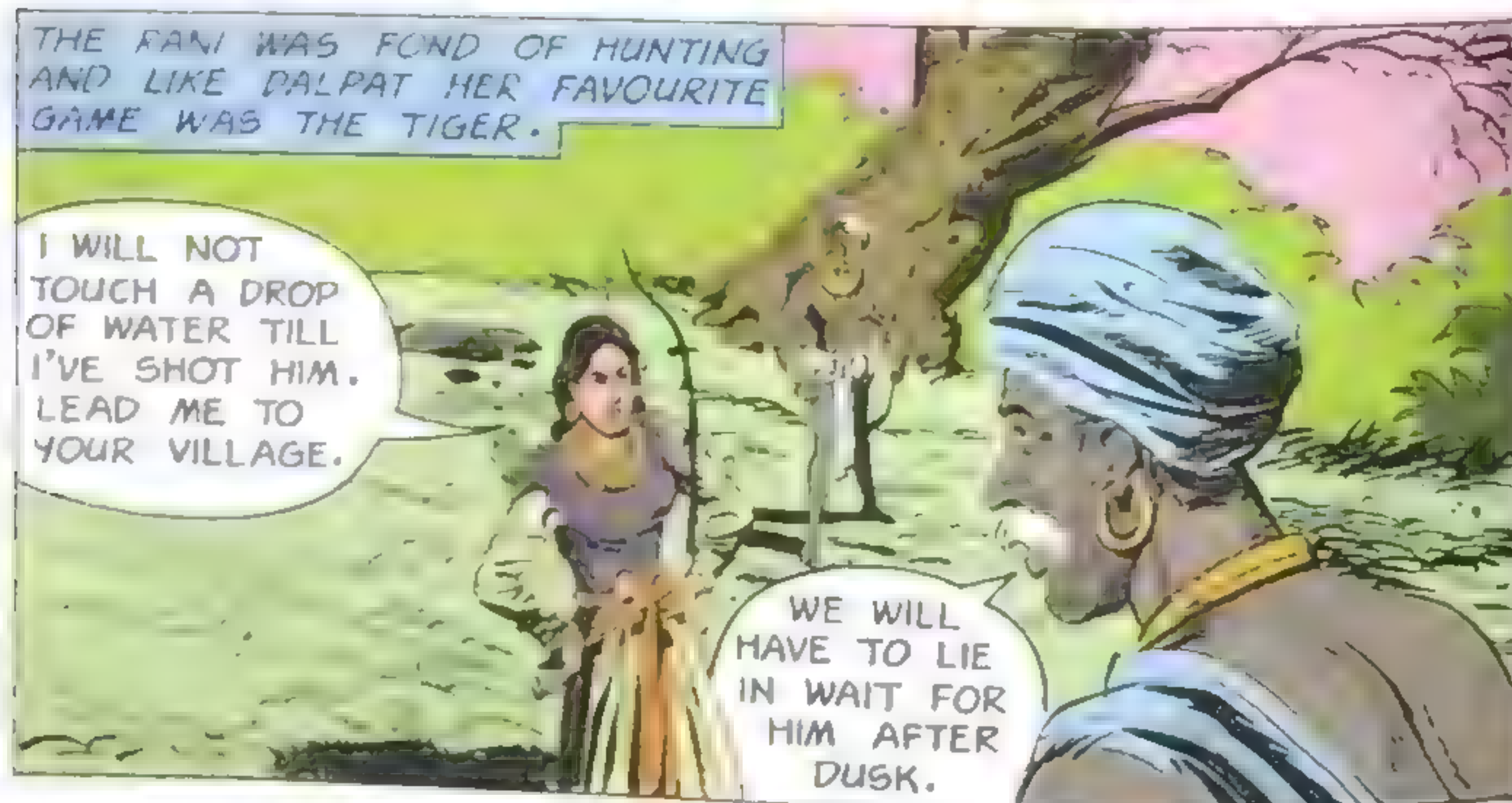
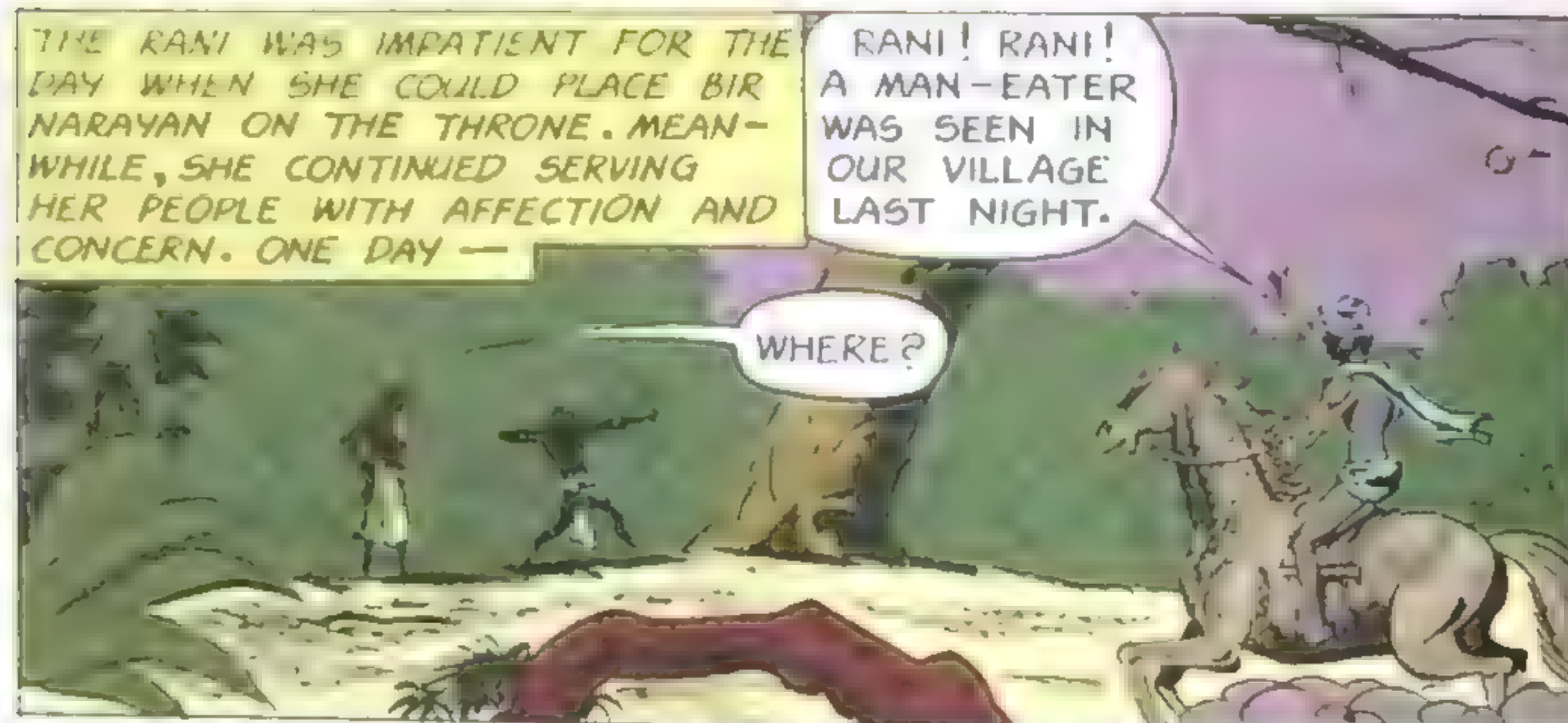
WE CAN NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION TO CIVIL MATTERS AND THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE.

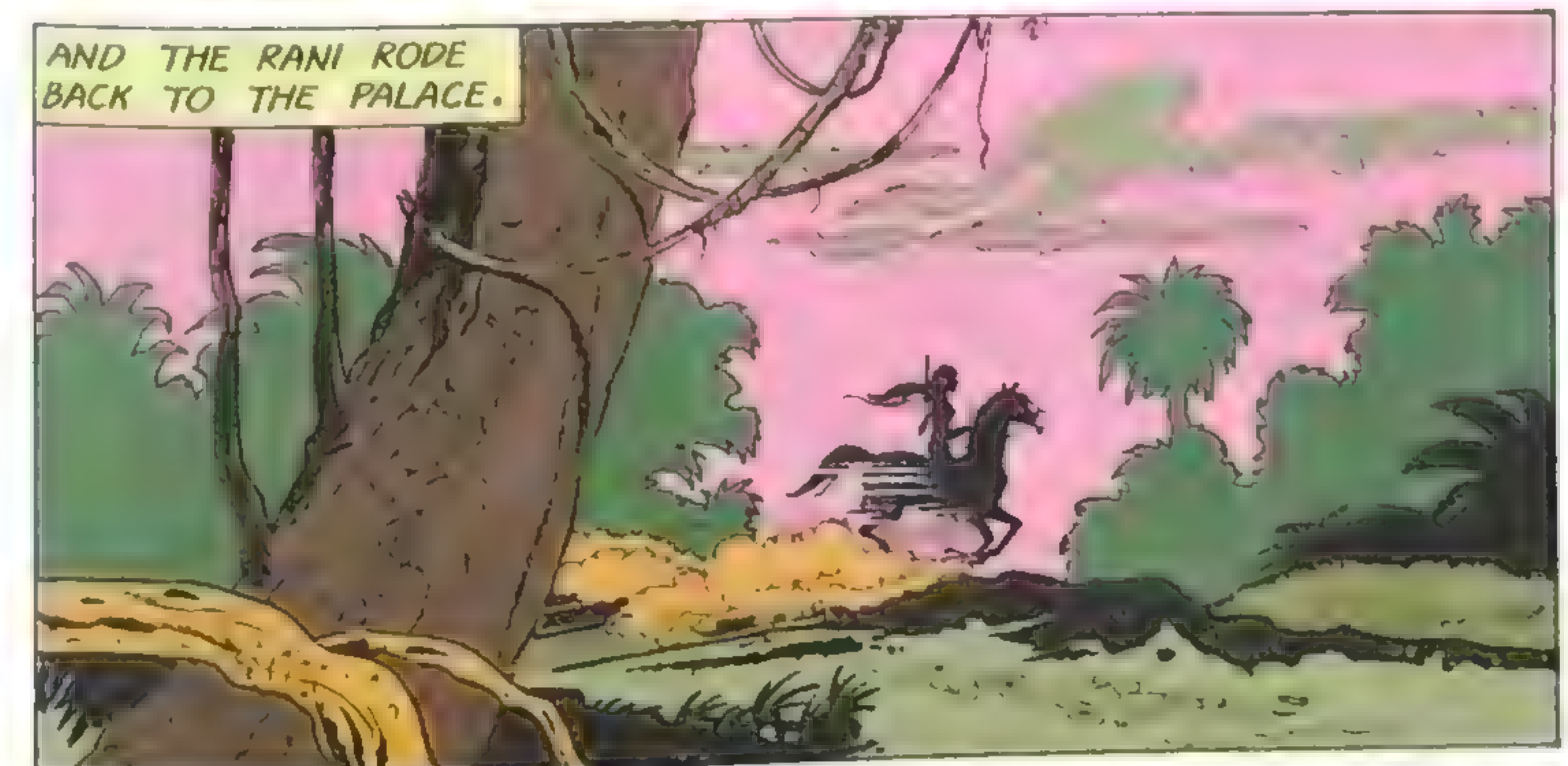
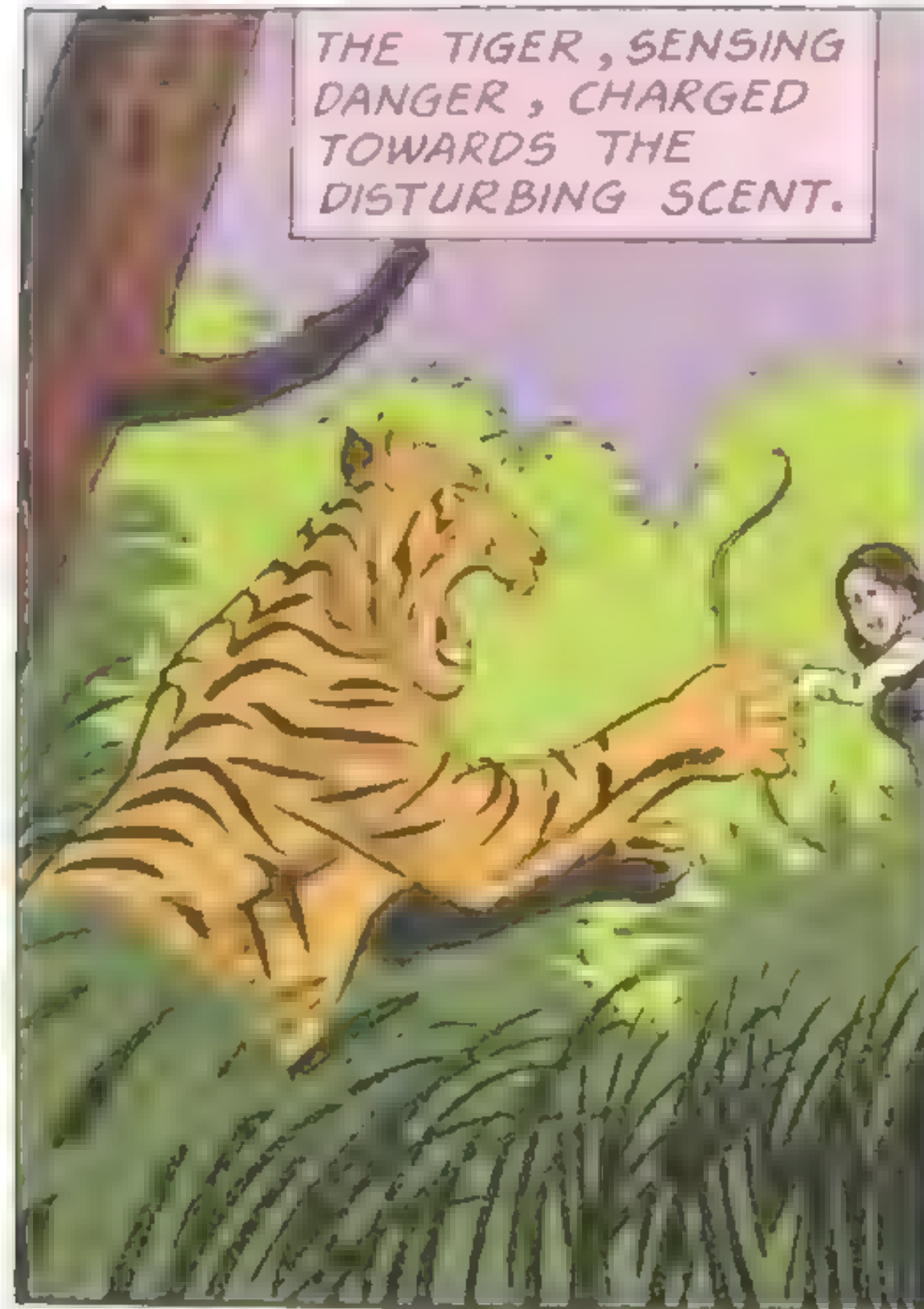
THE PEOPLE OF GARHA THRIVED UNDER HER PROTECTION.



IF IT WERE NOT FOR OUR RANI, GARHA WOULD LONG HAVE FALLEN INTO ALIEN HANDS!

YES! THE DAY OUR PRINCE DECIDED TO WIN HER HAND WAS THE HAPPIEST ONE FOR US.





MEANWHILE, THE PROSPEROUS PROVINCE OF GARHA SOON BECAME FAMOUS AND ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE GREAT MUGHAL EMPEROR, AKBAR.

WHY HAVEN'T WE CONQUERED AND ANNEXED THIS PROVINCE BEFORE? IT NEEDS OUR PATRONAGE AND PROTECTION.

ALAMPANAH*, FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES NO MONARCH HAS BEEN ABLE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THAT PROVINCE. AND...



...AND NOW WITH RANI DURGAVATI AS ITS RULER IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE!

AKBAR LOOKED SCORNFULLY AT HIM.

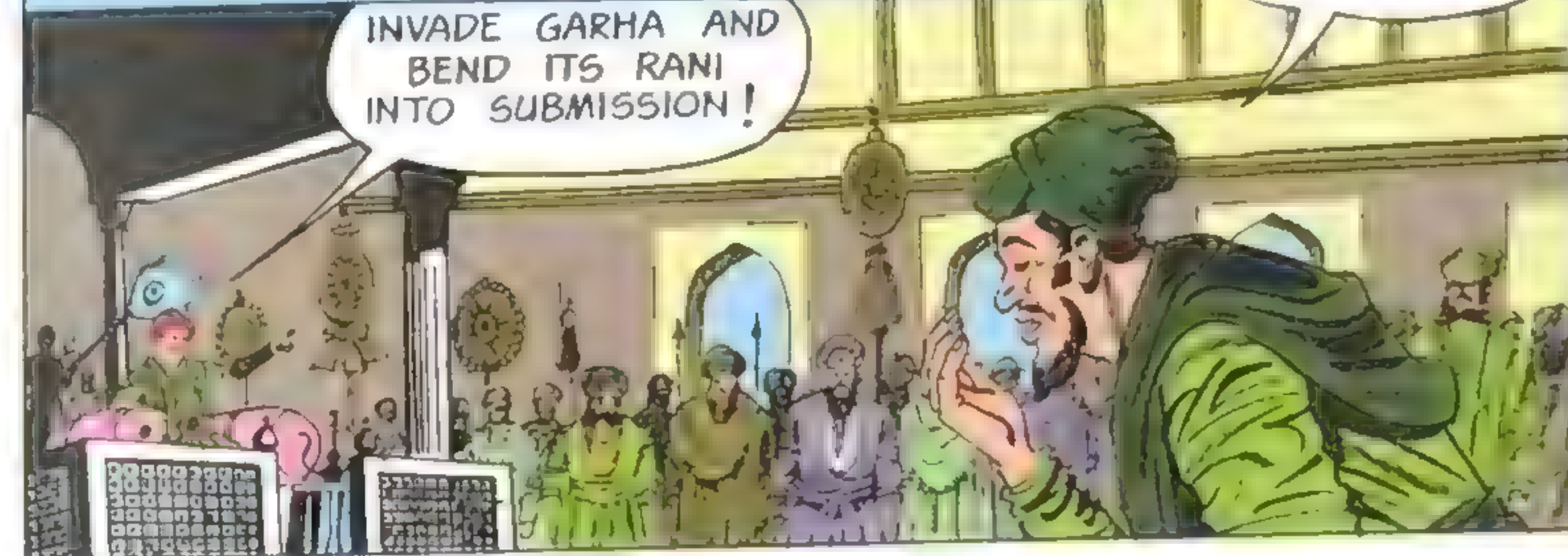
WHAT! GARHA RULED BY A MERE WOMAN? AND YOU SAY IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ANNEX IT. SEND FOR ASAF KHAN.



ASAF KHAN, THE GOVERNOR OF KARA AND THE EASTERN PROVINCES, ADJOINING GARHA, PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE THE EMPEROR.

IT SHALL BE DONE WITH EASE, ALAMPANAH.

INVADE GARHA AND BEND ITS RANI INTO SUBMISSION!

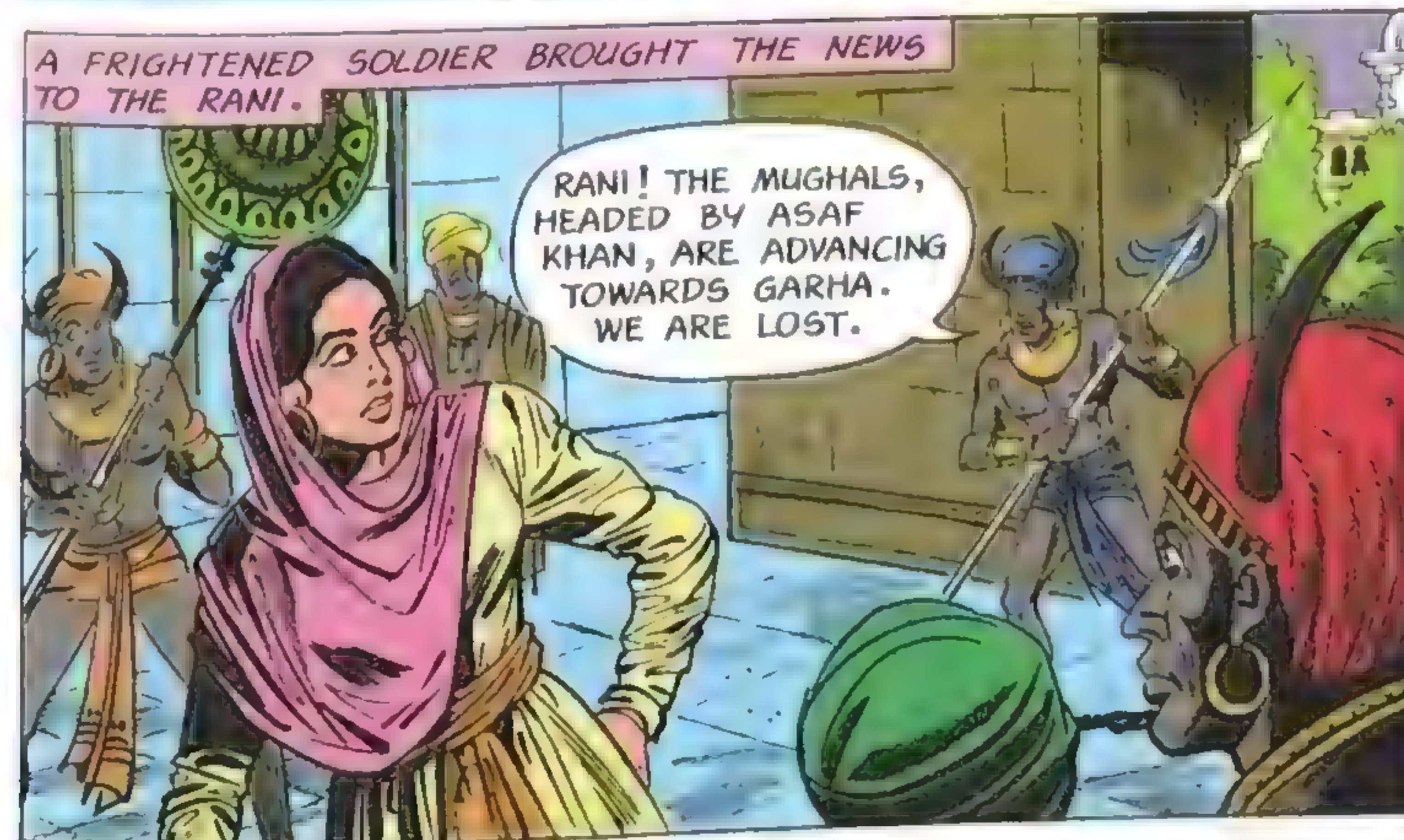


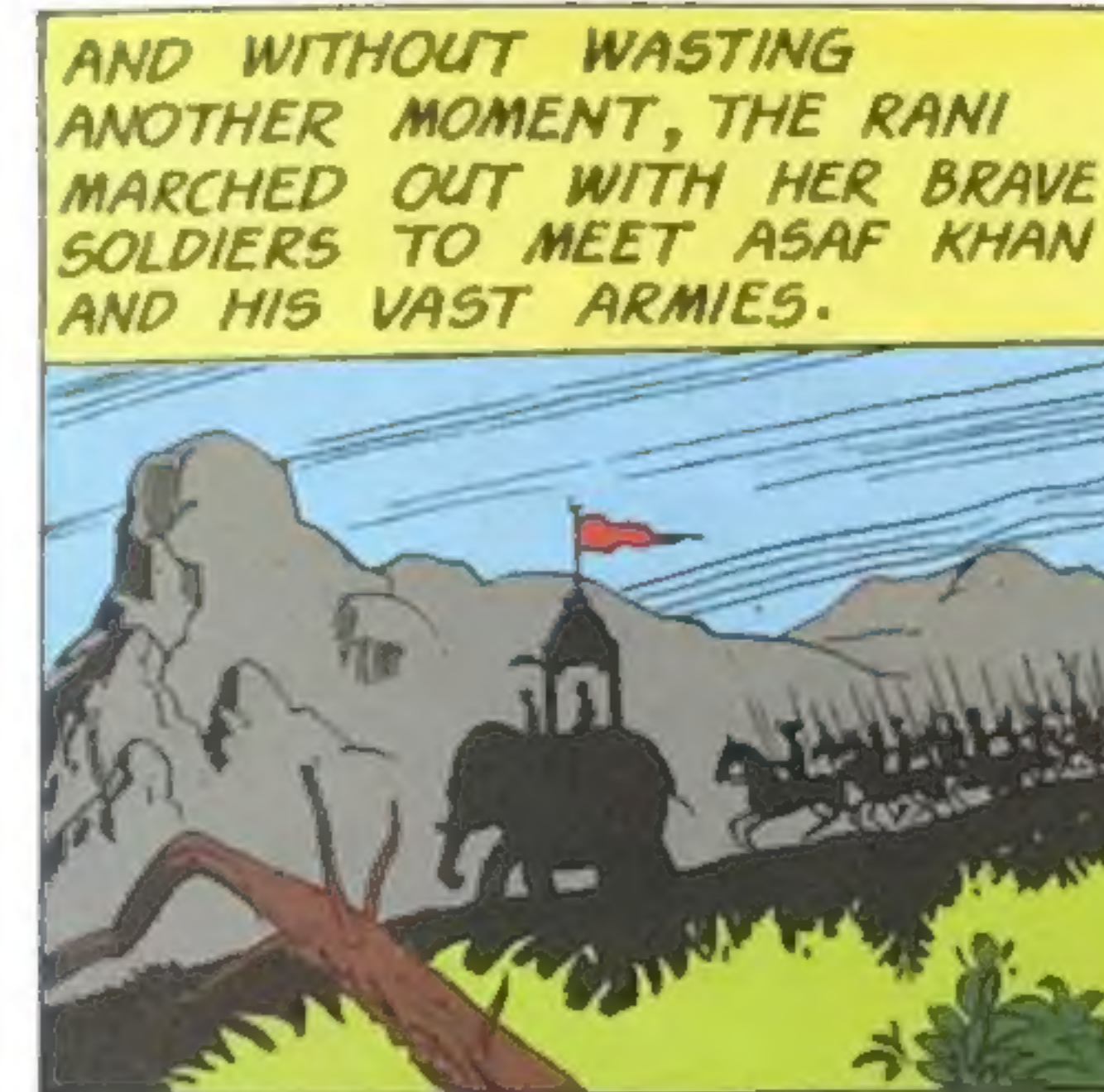
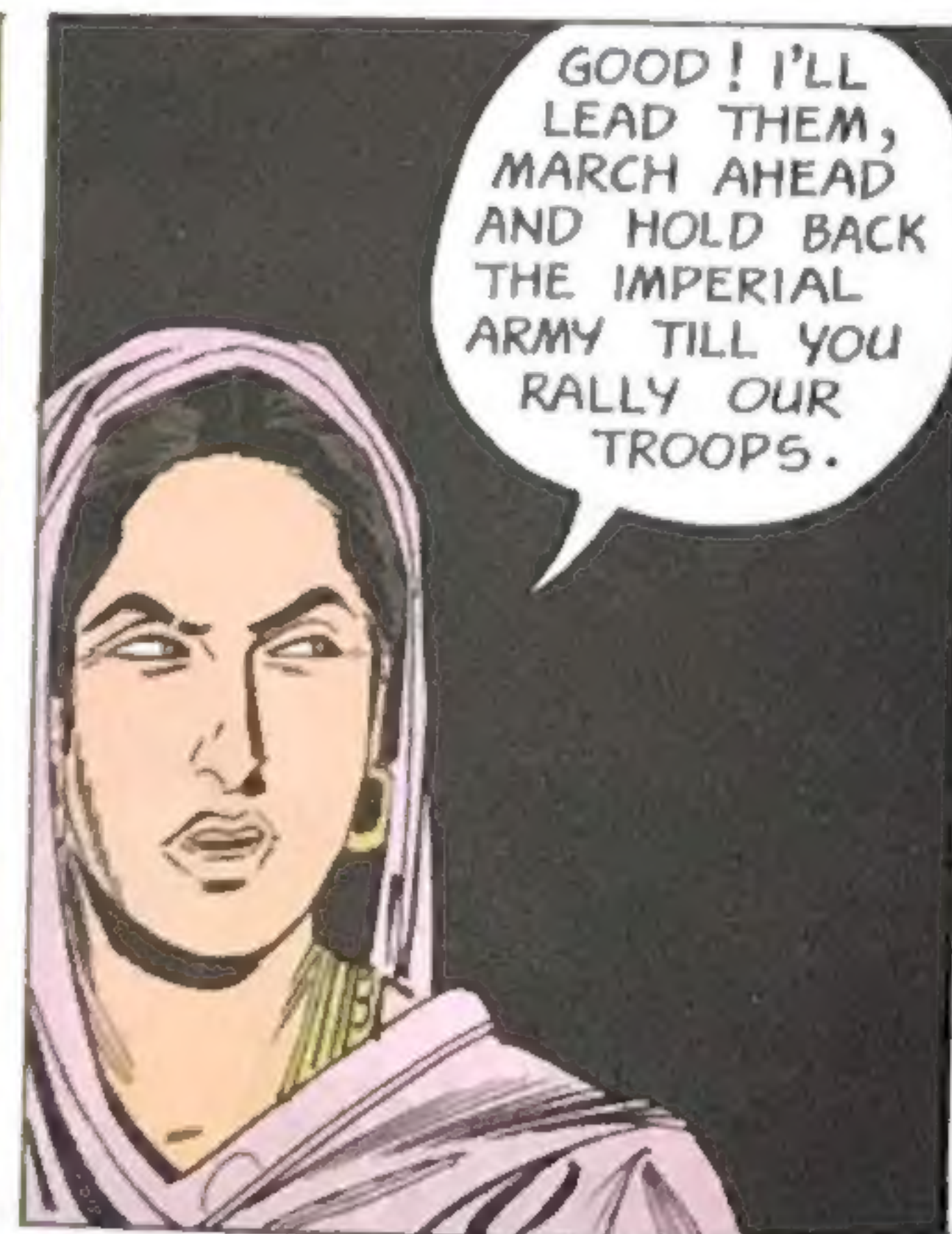
ASAF KHAN, AT THE HEAD OF A HUGE ARMY, MARCHED UP TO GARHA.



A FRIGHTENED SOLDIER BROUGHT THE NEWS TO THE RANI.

RANI! THE MUGHALS, HEADED BY ASAF KHAN, ARE ADVANCING TOWARDS GARHA. WE ARE LOST.





AFTER THEY WERE REFRESHED THEY RODE THROUGH THE GORGE TO THE OTHER END.

AFTER THIS SPOT THE GORGE GETS WIDER AND WILL NOT SERVE OUR PURPOSE. TAKE UP YOUR POSITIONS ON THE HILLS ON EITHER SIDE. I WILL REMAIN HERE WITH A FEW MEN.



MEANWHILE, LEARNING OF HER MOVEMENTS ASAF KHAN AND HIS ARMY ADVANCED TOWARDS THE GORGE.

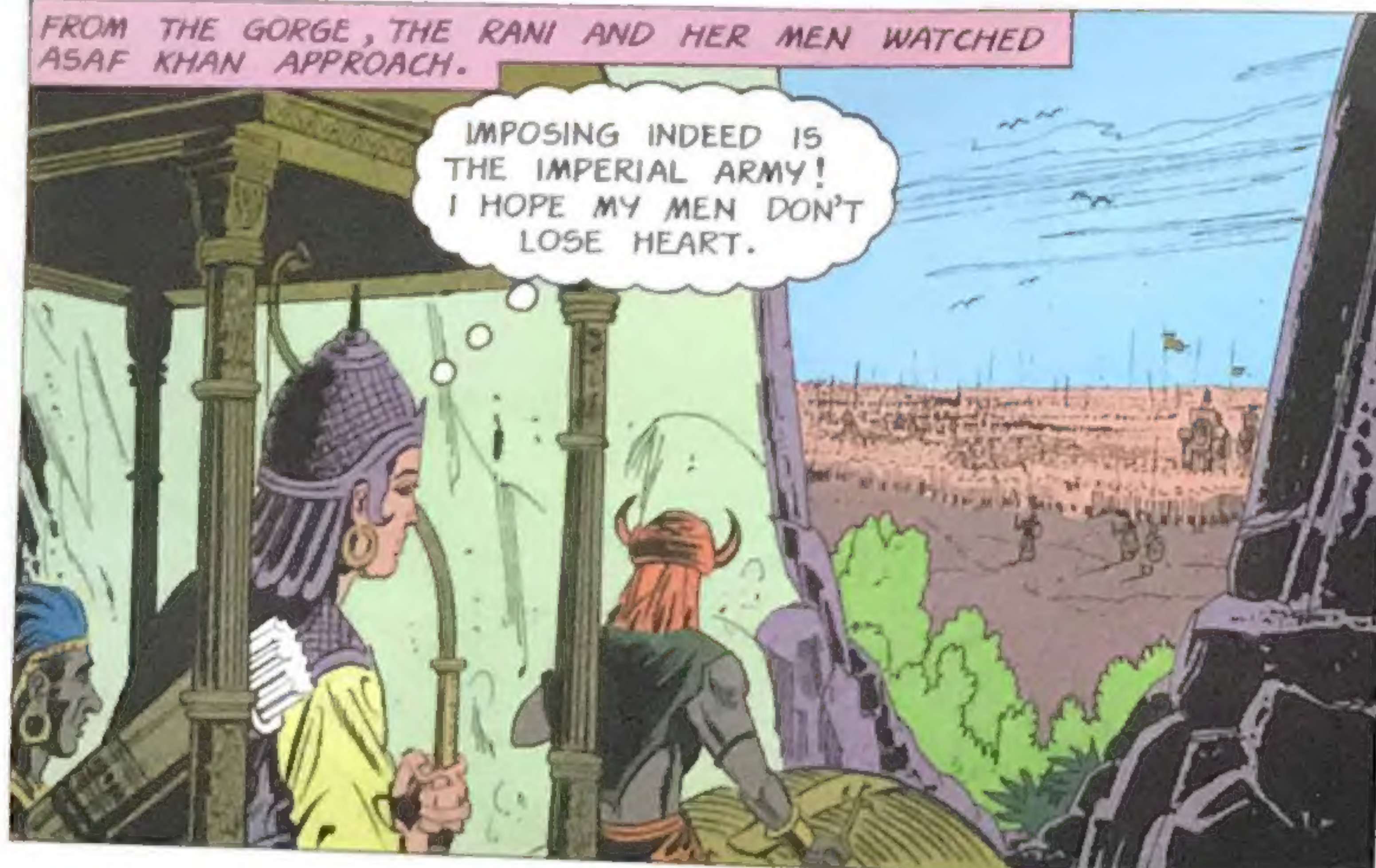
OUR SPIES SAY THAT THE RANI HAS HARDLY A HANDFUL OF MEN.

YET, I WOULD NOT UNDER-ESTIMATE HER.



FROM THE GORGE, THE RANI AND HER MEN WATCHED ASAF KHAN APPROACH.

IMPOSING INDEED IS THE IMPERIAL ARMY! I HOPE MY MEN DON'T LOSE HEART.



THE TWO ARMIES MET.

CHARGE! ATTACK! DON'T LET THE SCOUNDRELS DEFILE OUR SOIL.



THE RANI AND HER MEN FOUGHT WITH A FURY THAT ASAF KHAN AND HIS VAST ARMY FOUND DIFFICULT TO MATCH.

HAVE I UNDERESTIMATED THE RANI?



BY EVENING, ASAF KHAN'S ARMY WAS TOTALLY ROUTED.

WE HAVE LOST FAR TOO MANY MEN. LET US RETURN TO CAMP.



PURSUE THE FUGITIVES. CHASE THEM OUT OF OUR SACRED SOIL.



WHEN THE LAST OF THE MUGHALS WAS CHASED AWAY —

WE MUST EITHER RETURN TO CAMP AND MAKE A SURPRISE ATTACK AT NIGHT OR REMAIN HERE TILL DAYBREAK TO RENEW THE BATTLE.

I DON'T THINK THEY WILL RETURN TO FIGHT. OUR MEN ARE TIRED. LET US GO BACK TO CAMP AND REST TONIGHT.



IF WE DO, ASAF KHAN WILL SCALE THE HILLS BY MORNING AND POST HIS ARTILLERY ON THEM.

I THINK THE RANI IS RIGHT.

ASAF KHAN WILL NOT RETURN.



THE OLD COUNSELLOR INSISTED AND HIS WORD PREVAILED.

THE NEXT MORNING, WHAT THE RANI HAD PREDICTED HAPPENED. TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, THE SKIES WERE DARK AND THE CLOUDS THREATENED TO BURST ANY MOMENT.



COURAGE, MY MEN. WE WILL NOT GIVE UP. LET US ATTACK. I WILL LEAD YOU.

AS THE RANI, MOUNTED ON HER BEST ELEPHANT, LED THE CHARGE, THE RAIN CAME DOWN IN TORRENTS.



BIR NARAYAN WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO BE WOUNDED.



TAKE HIM AWAY TO SAFETY.

MANY OF THE SOLDIERS, WHO WERE LOSING HEART, TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION.



LET US GO WITH HIM AND SAVE OUR LIVES TOO, WHILE WE CAN.

YES. THE RANI IS RECKLESS. SHE SHOULD NEGOTIATE.

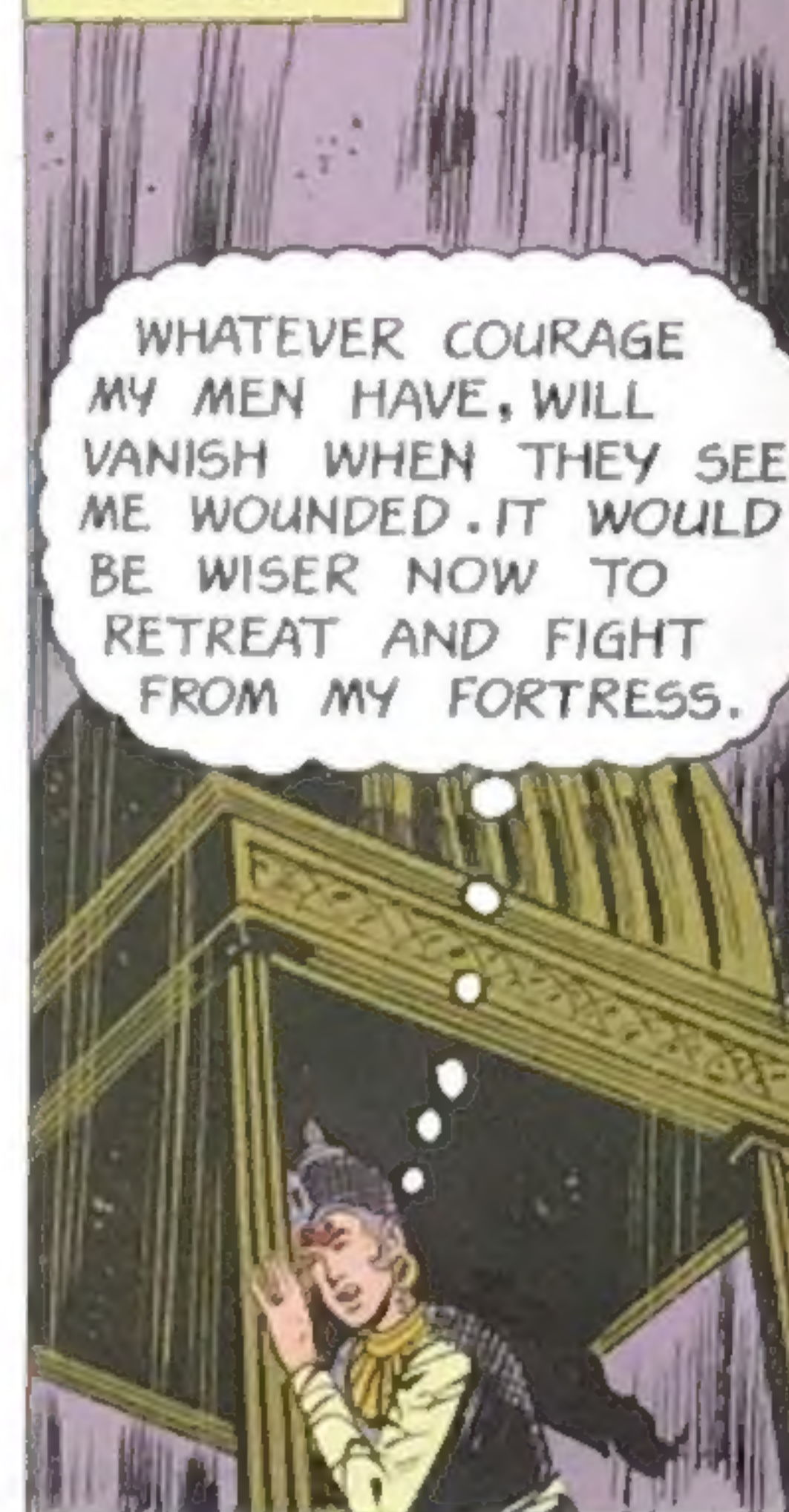
THE RANI, HOWEVER, FOUGHT ON. AN ARROW PIERCED HER TEMPLE BUT SHE PULLED IT OUT AND ...



... CONTINUED FIGHTING.

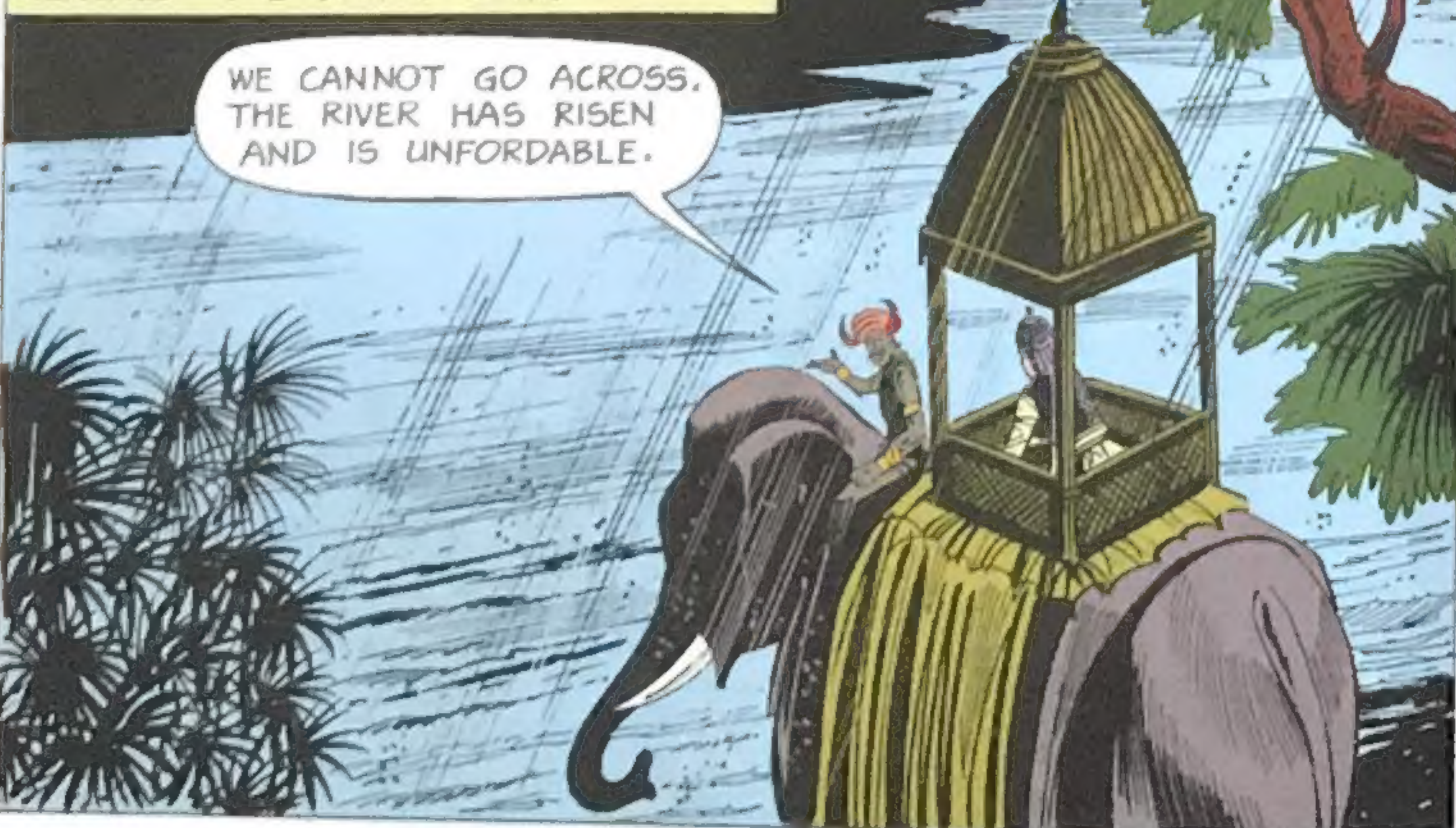


ANOTHER ARROW PIERCED HER NECK. SHE COULD HARDLY SIT ON HER ELEPHANT.



WHATEVER COURAGE MY MEN HAVE, WILL VANISH WHEN THEY SEE ME WOUNDED. IT WOULD BE WISER NOW TO RETREAT AND FIGHT FROM MY FORTRESS.

BUT THE RANI WAS NOT FATED TO WORK OUT HER PLAN. WHEN SHE REACHED THE RIVER BANK —



WE CANNOT GO ACROSS. THE RIVER HAS RISEN AND IS UNFORDABLE.

THE RANI HAD TO THINK FAST. THE ENEMY WAS CLOSING IN UPON HER.



RANI, PLEASE LET ME TAKE YOU TO A SAFE PLACE.

THE RANI SCORNE HIS SUGGESTION.



AND PERCHANCE FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY. NO! I AM OVERCOME IN BATTLE. GOD FORBID THAT I ALSO BE OVERCOME IN NAME AND HONOUR.

SHE PULLED OUT HER DAGGER.



I WOULD RATHER DIE IN HONOUR THAN LIVE IN DISGRACE.

AND LIKE THE TRUE RAJPUTNI THAT SHE WAS, THE PROUD RANI STABBED HERSELF.

